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Goldsmith

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AN
HISTORY
OF
ENGLAND,
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS
FROM A
NOBLEMAN TO HIS SON.

[Oliver Goldsmith]

VOL. I.

Nec minimum meruere decus, vestigia Græca
Ausi deserere, & celebrare domestica facta. Hor.

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LONDON:

LOGIC

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

TO A

YOUNG LADY

MONACENSIS
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REGIA

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE editor cannot diſmiſs a new edition of this work, without expreſſing the pleaſure he feels in its reception. It was at firſt uſhered into the world with none of the uſual methods of awakening curioſity, or biaſſing the judgment. Its author, as well as its editor, was, and ſtill continues, unknown. It appeared with very little ſplendor, ſcarce any expence was laid out in the publication, and that praiſe was ſtudiouſly avoided which was only to be caught by purſuing.

However, under all theſe diſadvantages, the work has ſucceeded beyond the editor's moſt ſanguine expectations, if he may judge from the numbers which have been ſold, and the commendations which have been given. Nor can it be a circumſtance of ſmall pleaſure to him, to think that a performance, calculated chiefly to diſpel the perjudice of party, and ſoften the malevolence of faction, has had purchaſers, at a time when almoſt every new publication that reſpects our hiſtory or conſtitution tends to fix the one and inflame the other.

It is true, that but very little of the merit is his own, and that he only applauds himſelf for triumphs which have been gained by another. However, he is willing to take to himſelf thoſe advantages which are declined by the great perſonage who has only deſerved them; for the poor often think themſelves very fine in thoſe cloaths which are thrown aſide by their betters.

But, to ſpeak more particularly of my own part the work, I am not a little proud in hearing that the concluſion is not entirely contemptible, and that it does not fall very far ſhort of the beginning. It was my aim to obſerve the perſpicuity and conciſeneſs of the original, and as his Lordſhip ſeems to have taken Tacitus for his model, ſo I took him for mine. It was, in fact, no eaſy matter, in ſuch a variety of material as our hiſtory affords, to reject trivial particulars, and yet preſerve a concatenation of events; to crowd a multitude

of facts into so small a Compass, and yet not give the work the air of an index. In this, all who have hitherto abridged our history have failed; how far the present work has succeeded, posterity must be left to judge.

The first part of these letters, as we have formerly observed, were written for the instruction of a young man of quality, who was then at college; the editor, therefore, is surprised with an objection usually made against them, that they are rather above the capacity of boys. If by boys be meant children, I grant it; the facts, stript of all ornament, may perhaps be most proper for them: but, on the contrary, those who are rising up to manhood, should be treated as men, and no works put into their hands, but such as are capable of exercising their capacity, and which the most mature judgment would approve. I am well aware, that many schoolmasters will prefer any of those little histories of England that are written by way of question and answer, and think their boys making great advances, while they are thus loading their memory, without exercising their judgment: with these men no arguments will prevail; and I can only dismiss such with wishing that the professors were as respectable as the profession.

Once more, therefore, I must assert, that, though the book is written to men, it will be a proper guide for the instruction of boys. *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, is true, as well with regard to the books they should read, as the examples they should see. In this I flatter myself, that they will find nothing here either to corrupt their morals or their style; no slavish tenets that abridge freedom and increase dependence; no enthusiastic rants, that drive even virtue beyond the line of duty. Scarce any opinions are hazarded merely from their elegance or singularity; truth only seems to have guided the pen: and it is remarkable that many of the tenets in these letters, that at first publication seemed paradoxical, have been since illustrated by one of the most elegant commentators upon our constitution *.

AN

* Dr Blackstone.

AN

HISTORY

OF

ENGLAND,

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

LETTER I.

Dear Charles,

THE accounts I receive from Mr. ****, your tutor at Oxford, of your conduct and capacity, give me equal pleasure, both as a father and as a man. I own myself happy, in thinking that society will one day reap the advantage of your improved abilities; but I confess myself vain, when I reflect on the care I have taken, and the honour I shall, perhaps, obtain from assisting their cultivation. Yes, my Charles, self interest thus mixes with almost every virtue; my paternal vanity is, perhaps, greater than my regards for society in the present instance;

but you ſhould conſider that the bad pride themſelves in their folly, but good minds alone are vain of their virtues.

I need ſcarcely repeat what I have ſo often obſerved, that your aſſiduity for a few years, in the early period of life, will give eaſe and happineſs to the ſucceeding: a life ſpent in regularity and ſtudy, in college, will not only furniſh the mind with proper materials, but fit it, by habit, for future felicity. Mathematics will teach you to think with cloſeneſs and preciſion, and the ancient poets will enlarge your imagination: from theſe two helps, and not from the ſubtleties of logic, or metaphyſical ſpeculations, the mind is at once ſtrengthened and improved. Logic or metaphyſics may give the theory of reaſoning; but it is poetry and mathematics, tho' ſeemingly oppoſite, that practically improve and fit us for every rational enquiry.

Theſe were the ſtudies I recommend as principally conducive to your improvement, and your letters alone are ſufficient inſtances of your complying with my advice. I confeſs my fears in giving any future inſtructions on ſuch topics to one who ſeems better converſant with them than his inſtructor: I therefore muſt leave a ſubject, where my ſuperiority at leaſt may be conteſted.

But, after all, my child, theſe ſtudies are at beſt but ornaments of the mind, deſigned rather to poliſh or to fit it for higher improvements, than as material, to be employed in guiding our conduct as individuals, or members of ſociety. There is a field that, in ſome meaſure, ſtill lies untrodden before you, and from that alone true wiſdom and real improvement can be expected; I mean hiſtory. From hiſtory, in a great meaſure, every advantage that improves the gentleman, or confirms the

patriot,

patriot, can be hoped for: it is that which muſt qualify you for becoming a proper member of the community; for filling that ſtation, in which you may hereafter be placed, with honour; and for giving, as well as deriving, new luſtre to that illuſtrious aſſembly, to which, upon my deceaſe, you have a right to be called.

Yet, ſtill, nothing can be more uſeleſs than hiſtory, in the manner in which it is generally ſtudied, where the memory is loaded with little more than dates, names, and events. Simply to repeat the tranſaction is by ſome thought ſufficient for every purpoſe; and a youth, having been once applauded for his readineſs in this way, fancies himſelf a perfect hiſtorian. But the true uſe of hiſtory does not conſiſt in being able to ſettle a genealogy, in quoting the events of an obſcure reign, or the true epoch of a conteſted birth; this knowledge of facts hardly deſerves the name of ſcience: true wiſdom conſiſts in tracing effects to their cauſes. To underſtand hiſtory is to underſtand man, who is the ſubject. To ſtudy hiſtory is to weigh the motives, the opinions, the paſſions of mankind, in order to avoid a ſimilitude of errors in ourſelves, or profit by the wiſdom of their example.

To ſtudy hiſtory in this manner may be begun at any age. Children can never be too ſoon treated as men. Thoſe maſters, who alledge the incapacity of tender youth, only tacitly reproach their own: thoſe who are incapable of teaching young minds to reaſon, pretend that it is impoſſible. The truth is, they are fonder of making their pupils talk well than think well; and much the greater number are better qualified to give praiſe to a ready memory than a ſound judgment. The generality of mankind conſider a multitude of facts as the

real food of the mind, not as ſubjects proper to afford it exerciſe. From hence it proceeds, that hiſtory, inſtead of teaching us to know ourſelves, often only ſerves to raiſe our vanity, by the applauſe of the ignorant; or, what is more dangerous, by the ſelf-deluſion of untried vanity.

Aſſuming ignorance is, of all diſpoſitions, the moſt ridiculous: for, in the ſame proportion as the real man of wiſdom is preferable to the unlettered ruſtic, ſo much is the ruſtic ſuperior to him, who without learning imagines himſelf learned. It were better that ſuch a man had never read, for then he might have been conſcious of his weakneſs; but the half-learned man, relying upon his ſtrength, ſeldom perceives his wants till he finds his deception paſt a cure.

Your labours in hiſtory have hitherto been rather confined to the words, than the facts, of your hiſtorical guides. You have read Xenophon or Livy, rather with a view of learning the dead languages in which they are written, than of profiting by the inſtructions which they afford. The time is now come for diſcontinuing the ſtudy of words for things; for exerciſing your judgment, and giving more room to reaſon than the fancy.

Above all things, I would adviſe you to conſult the original hiſtorians in every relation. Abridgers, compilers, commentators, and critics, are in general only fit to fill the mind with unneceſſary anecdotes, or lead its reſearches aſtray. In the immenſity of various relations, your care muſt be to ſelect ſuch as deſerve to be known, becauſe they ſerve to inſtruct; the end of your labour ſhould not be to know in what year fools or ſavages committed their extravagancies, but by what methods they emerged from barbarity. The ſame neceſſity

there

there is for knowing the actions of the worthy part of princes, alſo compels us to endeavour to forget thoſe of the ignorant and vulgar herd of kings, who ſeem only to ſlumber in a ſeat they were accidentally called to fill. In ſhort, not the hiſtory of kings, but of men, ſhould be your principal concern; and ſuch an hiſtory is only to be acquired by conſulting thoſe originals who painted the times they lived in. Their ſucceſſors, who pretended to methodize their hiſtories, have almoſt univerſally deprived them of all their ſpirit, and given us rather a dry catalogue of names, than an improving detail of events. In reality hiſtory is precious or inſignificant, not from the brilliancy of the events, the ſingularity of the adventures, or the greatneſs of the perſonages concerned, but from the ſkill, penetration, and judgment of the obſerver. Tacitus frequently complains of his want of materials, of the littleneſs of his incidents, of the weakneſs and villainy of his actors; yet, even from ſuch indifferent ſubjects, he has wrought out the moſt pleaſing and the moſt inſtructive hiſtory that ever was written: it will therefore be entirely the work of your own judgment to convert the generality of hiſtorians to your benefit; they are, at preſent, but rude materials, and require a fine diſcernment to ſeparate the uſeful from the unneceſſary, and analyſe their different principles.

Yet, miſtake me not: I would not have hiſtory to conſiſt of dry ſpeculations upon facts, told with phlegm, and purſued without intereſt and paſſion; nor would I have your reaſon fatigued continually in critical reſearches: all I require is, that this hiſtorian would give as much exerciſe to the judgment as the imagination. It is as much his duty to act the philoſopher, or politician, in his narratives,

as to collect materials for narration. Without a philoſophical ſkill in diſcerning, his very narrative muſt be frequently falſe, fabulous, and contradictory; without political ſagacity, his characters muſt be ill drawn, and vice and virtue be diſtributed without diſcernment or candour.

What hiſtorian can render virtue ſo amiable as Xenophon? Who can intereſt the reader ſo much as Livy? Salluſt is an inſtance of the moſt delicate exactneſs, and Tacitus of the moſt ſolid reflection: from a perfect acquaintance with theſe, the youthful ſtudent can acquire more knowledge of mankind, a more perfect acquaintance with antiquity, and a more juſt manner of thinking and expreſſion, than, perhaps, from any others of any age or country. Other ancient hiſtorians may be read to advance the ſtudy of ancient learning, but theſe ſhould be the ground-work of all your reſearches. Without a previous acquaintance with theſe, you enter upon other writers improperly prepared; until theſe have placed you in a proper train of moralizing the incidents, other hiſtorians may, perhaps, injure, but will not improve you. Let me therefore, at preſent, my dear Charles, intreat you to beſtow the proper care upon thoſe treaſures of antiquity; and by your letters, every poſt, communicate to your father, and your friend, the reſult of your reflections upon them. I am at a loſs, whether I ſhall find more ſatisfaction in hearing your remarks, or communicating my own? However, in which ſoever of them I ſhall be employed, it will make my higheſt amuſement. Amuſement is all that I can now expect in life, for ambition has long forſaken me; and, perhaps, my child, after all, what your noble anceſtor has obſerved is moſt true: *When all is done, human life is, at the greateſt and*

the beſt, but like a froward child, that muſt be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls aſleep, and then the care is over.

LETTER II.

I Entirely acquieſce in your ſentiments, that univerſal hiſtory is a ſubject too extenſive for human comprehenſion, and that he who would really reap the advantages of hiſtory muſt be contented to bound his views. Satisfied with being ſuperficially acquainted with the tranſactions of many countries, the learner ſhould place his principal attention only on a few.

Your remarks on the Greek and Roman republics far ſurpaſs my expectations; you have juſtly characteriſed them as the fineſt inſtances of political ſociety that could be founded on the baſis of a falſe religion. Where religion is imperfect, political ſociety, and all laws enacted for its improvement, muſt be imperfect alſo. Religion is but philoſophy refined; and no man could ever boaſt an excellence in politics, whoſe mind had not been previouſly opened and enlarged by the inſtitutions of theology, an error in religion ever producing defects in legiſlation.

Forgive me, dear Charles, if I once more congratulate myſelf upon the pleaſure I expect from your future eminence. You are now tinctured with univerſal hiſtory, and are thoroughly converſant with that of Greece and Rome; but there is another department of hiſtory ſtill remaining, and that much more important than any I have yet mentioned; I mean the HISTORY OF ENGLAND. The hiſtory of this country is the proper ſtudy of an

Engliſhman ; however, it peculiarly concerns thoſe who may, like you, one day have ſuch an important character to ſupport in its adminiſtration, and whoſe own name, perhaps, may find a place in the hiſtoric page. All who are enamoured of the liberty and the happineſs which they peculiarly enjoy in this happy region, muſt ſurely be deſirous of knowing the methods by which ſuch advantages were acquired ; the progreſſive ſteps from barbarity to ſocial refinement, from ſociety to the higheſt pitch of well conſtituted freedom. All Europe ſtands in aſtoniſhment at the wiſdom of our conſtitution, and it would argue the higheſt degree of inſenſibility in a native of this country, and one too who from his birth enjoys peculiar privileges, to be ignorant of what others ſo much admire.

I ſhall not inſiſt upon a principal uſe to which ſome apply the Engliſh hiſtory, I mean that of making it the topic of common converſation ; yet, even from ſuch a motive, though in itſelf trifling, no well-bred man can plead ignorance. Its greateſt advantage, however, is, that a knowledge of the paſt enables the attentive mind to underſtand the preſent : our laws and cuſtoms, our liberties and abuſe of liberty, can ſcarcely be underſtood without tracing them to their ſource, and hiſtory is the only channel by which we can arrive at what we ſo eagerly purſue.

But, were I to compare the hiſtory of our own country, in point of amuſement, with that of others, I know of none, either ancient or modern, that can vie with it in this reſpect. In other hiſtories, remote and extenſive connections interrupt the reader's intereſt, and deſtroy the ſimplicity of the plan. The hiſtory of Greece may be eaſily divided into ſeven different hiſtories, and into ſo many

many it has actually been divided: the history of Rome, from the time it begins to be authentic, is little else than an account of the then known world: but, in England, separated, by its situation, from the continent, the reader may consider the whole narrative, with all its vicissitudes, in one point of view; it unites the philosopher's * definition of beauty, by being *variously uniform.*

The simplicity in an history of our own country is therefore excellent; but I can direct to few who have improved the materials it affords with a proper degree of assiduity or skill. The historians, who have treated of this subject, have in general written for a party; many, with an open avowal of their abuse. Some, who have had talents for this undertaking, were unable to afford themselves sufficient leisure to polish their work into the degree of requisite perfection; while others, who have laboured with sufficient assiduity, have been wofully deficient in point of sagacity, or proper skill in the choice of those facts they thought proper to relate. Whatever has been known, and not what was worth knowing, has been faithfully transcribed; so that the present accounts of the country resemble the ancient face of the soil: here an uncultivated forest; there a desolate wild; and, in a very few places, a spot of earth adorned by art, and smiling with all the luxuriance of nature. To make history, like the soil, truly useful, the obstacles to improvement must be torn away, new assistances must be acquired from art; nor can the work be deemed properly finished, till the whole puts on simplicity, uniformity, and elegance. As the case is at present, we must read a library, to acquire a knowledge of

* Hutcheson..

English

Engliſh hiſtory, and, after all, be contented to forget more than we remember.

The hiſtory of England may be divided, properly enough, into three periods; very different, indeed, with regard to their duration, but almoſt of equal importance. The firſt is from the commencement of our knowledge of the country to its conqueſt by the Normans; the ſecond, from the time of William the Conqueror to the alteration of the conſtitution by the beheading King Charles I; the laſt contains the remaining period of our hiſtory. It will at once appear, that ſuch a diviſion is extremely unequal: the firſt department may be ſaid to extend to a period of more than a thouſand years; the ſecond contains not leſs than ſeven hundred, while the remaining does not take up two. Chronologiſts, indeed, would divide it in a very different manner; however, I am rather inclined to this diviſion, more by the peculiar uſe which may be made of each period, than the mere regularity of time. To conſider the firſt part with accuracy, belongs properly to the philoſopher; the ſecond is the buſineſs of him who would underſtand our conſtitution, and is the proper ſtudy of a legiſlator; and the laſt, of ſuch as would be acquainted with the connexions and relations in which we ſtand with regard to our neighbours of the continent, and our foreign and domeſtic trade, that is, in other words, to the merchant and politician.

There is ſcarce any other paſſion, but that of curioſity, excited by a knowledge of the early part of our hiſtory. We may go through the accounts of that diſtant æra with the ſame impartiality with which we conſider the original inhabitants of any other country, as the cuſtoms of our Britiſh anceſtors have ſcarce any connexion with

our

our own: but then, to ſome minds, it muſt be a pleaſing diſquiſition to obſerve the human animal, by degrees, diveſting himſelf of his native ferocity, and acquiring the arts of happineſs and peace; to trace the ſteps, by which he leaves his precarious meal, acquired by the chaſe, for a more certain, but a more laborious repaſt, acquired firſt by paſturage, then by cultivation.

After the conqueſt, the rude outlines of our preſent conſtitution began to be formed. Before the Norman invaſion, there might be ſome cuſtoms reſembling thoſe at preſent in practice; but the only reaſon of their continuance was, becauſe they had before been practiſed in common among the invaders. At this period, therefore, an Engliſhman becomes intereſted in the narrative; he perceives the riſe and the reaſons of ſeveral laws, which now ſerve to reſtrain his conduct, or preſerve his property. The rights of our monarchs, the claims of foreign potentates, the ineffectual ſtruggles for liberty, and the gradual encroachments of ambition, theſe highly intereſt him, as he in ſome meaſure owes to theſe tranſactions the happineſs he enjoys.

But the laſt period is what is chiefly incumbent upon almoſt every man to be particularly converſant in. Every perſon, reſiding here, has a ſhare in the liberties of this kingdom; as the generality of the people are ultimately inveſted with the legiſlation. It is therefore every man's duty to know that conſtitution, which, by his birth-right, he is called to govern: a freeholder, in a free kingdom, ſhould certainly be inſtructed in the original of that agreement by which he holds ſo precious a tenure.

Theſe motives equally influence almoſt every rank of people; but how much more forcibly ſhould they operate upon you, whoſe honours, whoſe truſts, and poſſeſſions, are likely to be ſo conſiderable. Others may have their liberties to ſupport; you may ſuſtain your liberty, your property, and the dignity of your ſtation. I ſhall, therefore, without farther preface, in ſome future correſpondence, communicate the reſult of my enquiries on this ſubject; a ſubject which, I own, has employed all the leiſure I had to ſpare from, I will not ſay more important, but more neceſſary duties. I ſhall endeavour, at once, to ſupply the facts, and the neceſſary conſequences that may be deduced from them. I ſhall ſeparate all that can contribute nothing either to amuſement or uſe, and leave ſuch to dull compilers, or ſyſtematic writers of hiſtory, whoſe only boaſt is, *to leave nothing out*. A more thorough knowledge of the ſubject cannot be communicated without pain, nor acquired without ſtudy: perhaps too minute a ſkill in this, or any one ſubject, might diſqualify the mind for other branches of ſcience, equally demanding our care. Of whatever uſe it may be, I hope you will conſider it as an inſtance of my regard, though it ſhould fail to add to your opinion of my ſagacity.

LET-

LETTER III.

THERE ſeems to be a natural tendency in every nation to run its antiquity as far back as poſſible, and when once they have arrived at the regions of fiction, no bounds are ſet to the wonders of every narration. Were we to take our character of the ancient inhabitants of this iſland from the legends, monuments, or traditions, which have been left by thoſe inhabitants themſelves, we might be apt to imagine, that arts, even in that early period, were cultivated, and ſciences known, to ſome degree of perfection. The Druids, if we believe ſome fragments of their own, underſtood aſtronomy and medicine, and gave leſſons in morality and metaphyſics. But what credit can be given to the accounts of a barbarous people, told by themſelves? The knowledge and learning, indeed, of their prieſts might be great, if compared with the almoſt brutal ſimplicity and ignorance of the reſt of the people; but it could not deſerve the name of ſcience, if put in competition with what was known and practiſed by their polite contemporaries of Greece and Rome.

From the accounts of thoſe ſenſible writers, and not from the fictitious abſurdities of the Druids themſelves, we are to eſtimate this ancient people. All that we find related by credible witneſſes and ſufficieut authority, before the Romans entered this iſland, is, that the counrry was filled with incredible numbers of people, and their fields ſtored with great plenty of animals, ſavage and domeſtic. Their houſes were meanly built and ſcattered, as if acci-

dentally,

dentally, over the country, without obſervance, diſtance, or order. The only motives of their choice were the peculiar fertility of ſome happy ſpot, or the convenience of wood and water. They lived upon milk and fleſh procured by the chaſe; for corn was ſcarcely known among them. What cloaths they wore were ſkins of beaſts; but a great part of their bodies were left always expoſed to the injuries of weather, all that was naked being painted with blue. This cuſtom of painting was univerſal among them, either in order to ſtrike terror in their enemies, or to defend the pores of the naked ſkin from the injuries of the weather.

Their towns, if a collection of huts could deſerve that name, were moſtly built upon the coaſts, in places where ſtrangers generally reſorted for the ſake of commerce. The commodities exported were chiefly hides and tin; and, probably, other ſpontaneous productions of the ſoil, which required no art in the preparation.

Their government, like that of the ancient Gauls, conſiſted of ſeveral petty principalities, which ſeem to be the original governments of mankind, and deduced from the natural right of paternal dominion: but whether theſe little principalities deſcended by ſucceſſion, or whether the rulers were elected by the conſent of the people, is not recorded. Upon great or uncommon dangers, indeed, the chief commander of all their forces was choſen by common conſent in a general aſſembly, as Cæſar relates of Caſſibelaunus, upon his invaſion. The ſame was done upon their revolts againſt the Roman colonies, under Caractacus and their Queen Boadicea; for among them women were admitted to their principalities, and general commands, by the right of ſucceſſion, merit, or nobility.

Such

Such were the cuſtoms of the ancient Britons, and the ſame may ſerve for a deſcription of every other barbarous nation of which we have any knowledge. Savage man is an animal in almoſt every country the ſame; and all the difference between nations reſults from cuſtoms introduced by luxury, or cultivated by refinement. What the inhabitant of Britain was at that time, the inhabitant of South America, or Gafraria, may be at this day. But there was one cuſtom among the ancient inhabitants of this iſland, which ſeems peculiar to themſelves, and is not to be found in the acounts of any other ancient or modern nation. The cuſtom I mean, was a community of wives, among certain numbers, and by common conſent. Every man married, indeed, but one woman, who was always after, and alone, eſteemed his wife; but it was uſual for five or ſix, ten, twelve, or more, either brothers or friends, as they could agree, to have all their wives in common. But this, though calculated for their mutual happineſs, in fact proved their greateſt diſturbance; and we have ſome inſtances, in which this community of wives produced diſſenſions, jealouſies, and death. Every woman's children, however, were the property of him who married her; but all claimed a ſhare in the care and defence of the whole ſociety, ſince no man knew which was his own.

To eſtimate the wiſdom of the people, we muſt examine the manners of their teachers. If the laity were ſo very barbarous, the Druids, their inſtructors, muſt have but few pretences to ſuperior refinement: yet, I know not how, we have different and almoſt contradictory accounts of this extraordinary fraternity. They have been repreſented, by ſome, as perſons of learning, derived

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to them by long tradition. Their ſkill conſiſted in the obſervation of the heavens, and upon the influence of its appearance they give their countrymen omens of failure or ſucceſs. They taught a morality, which principally conſiſted in juſtice and fortitude. Their lives were ſimple and innocent, in woods, caverns, and hollow trees; their food acorns or berries, and their drink water. They were reſpected and admired, not only for knowing more than other men, but for deſpiſing what all others valued and purſued: by their virtue and temperance, they reproved and corrected thoſe vices in others, from which they were themſelves happily free; and made uſe of no other arms, than the reverence due to integrity, to enforce obedience to their own commands. From ſuch a conduct as this they derived ſo much authority, that they were not only prieſts, but judges alſo, throughout the nation. No laws were inſtituted without their approbation; no perſon puniſhed with bonds, or death, but by their condemnation.

But, on the other hand, we learn, that all their knowledge was impoſture, and their ſimplicity only a ſavage paſſion for ſolitude; their language barbarous, and their manners ſtill more rude; theſe were ſuch as called aloud for ſome more enlightened inſtructors, to conquer and to direct them. The Druids, ſeeming formed for the people whom they governed, ſacrificed human victims, which they burned in large wicker idols, which were made ſo capacious, as to contain a multitude of perſons, who were, in this manner, at once conſumed in the flames. The female Druids plunged their knives in the breaſts of the priſoners taken in war, and propheſied from the manner in which the blood happened to ſtream from the wound. Their

altars

altars conſiſted of four broad ſtones, three of which were ſet edgewiſe, and the fourth horizontally on the top, many of which are ſtill to be ſeen.

In accounts ſo ſeemingly contradictory, we are entirely to give aſſent to neither. That they pretended to aſtrology is certain: this, and not their piety, probably gave them ſuch influence among their countrymen. To judge of what the Britons then were, as I have already hinted, we muſt look to what ſavage nations are at preſent: we perceive what authority a pretence to aſtrology, in barbarous countries, confers; the aſtrologer being generally conſidered, in almoſt all the eaſtern kingdoms, as the ſecond, if not the firſt man of the ſtate. That the Druids deceived the people with a falſe religion cannot be denied; but, yet, I can never think that they were impoſtors: they firſt deceived themſelves into a belief and veneration of what they taught, and then made uſe of every motive to perſuade the people. The ignorant and erroneous, in the commerce of this life, are many; the villains and impoſtors are, comparatively ſpeaking, but few. As for human ſacrifices, few probably were deſtroyed upon this horrid occaſion, but priſoners taken in war; and ſuch have ever been ſacrificed by ſavage nations, rather from a principle of revenge than religion. It is not peculiar to the religion of the Druids alone, but was primarily the barbarous practice of thoſe very nations who then exclaimed againſt it moſt loudly.

In ſhort, the religion of the Druids was no more than that of every barbarous nation with whoſe ceremonies we have any acquaintance. This was the religion which was not only practiſed in Britain, but which prevailed, originally, over the greateſt part of the world. The original inhabi-

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tants of Europe, as a learned antiquary * has finely proved, were the ſame; all ſpeaking one language, obeying the ſame deities, and governed by ſimilar laws. Succeſſive invaſions from different parts of Aſia brought new changes; and, as the colonies went weſtward, the Greek, the Roman, and Teutonic languages and cuſtoms were ſuper-induced over the ancient Celtic. All the countries, moſt acceſſible to ſtrangers, or moſt ſubject to invaſions, were firſt changed; thoſe which lay ſurrounded by mountains, or were in ſome meaſure retired by their ſituation, ſuch as Wales, Cornwall, the Highlands of Scotland, Ireland, Biſcay, and Crim Tartary, all preſerved their primitive manners. It is even found, that theſe countries ſtill adhere to many of the ancient Druidical cuſtoms, as far as the alteration of religion will admit. We have, as yet, an opportunity of viewing many of their ancient, and, in ſome meaſure, venerable ſuperſtitions, ſtill in Ireland; theſe are, however, wearing out by degrees, and another century will entirely efface every veſtige of barbarous antiquity.

I am,

Dear Charles, &c.

* Perron.

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LETTER IV.

IT is, in some measure, happy for a barbarous people to be conquered by a country more polite than themselves. Whatever evils the ambition of heroes generally produces, it is attended with one advantage, that of disseminating arts, and making humanity more extensive. The Britons, savage and rude as they were, in some measure, called for more polite instructors; and the Romans, of all the conquerors history can produce, were at once the most polite, the most generous, and humane.

A country, divided like Britain into a variety of small principalities, must necessarily have been separated into various, and often opposite, interests. Its princes must have been frequently at war, merely for the sake of plunder, to keep their troops in exercise, or to gratify vanity and ambition. We may easily, therefore, from an idea of the miseries of a rude people, who had nothing but fear to keep them from war with each other, and who could build no longer on a lasting peace, than while they avoided giving an opportunity of plunder to their enemies.

To complete the picture of the calamities of this people, all the trading and maritime towns, next the continent, were in possession of foreign invaders long before the Romans entered the island. These were a people who had been received from motives of hospitality, and who, under the character of exiles in distress, having got footing and shelter among the natives, afterwards made war upon them as enemies. This, added to their frequent

quent tumults and maſſacres among each other, render them not only internally unhappy, but an eaſy prey to each invader. Beſides, they were ill ſupplied with arms, and thoſe they had were only ſuch as were no longer in uſe among the refined nations of the continent. They fought in chariots armed with ſcythes, applied to the wheels. Theſe were terrible without execution, and made rather to aſtoniſh the rude and ignorant, than to break ſuch ranks as were not to be daunted by the mere appearance of danger. Their defenſive armour only conſiſted of a wicker ſhield; and they approached the enemy ſhouting, claſhing their arms, and ſounding their trumpet, as if they deſigned rather to terrify than deſtroy. Their chariots generally attacked the enemy's cavalry, and from theſe they would frequently leap, and fight on foot, till, being fatigued or overpowered, they would reſume their ſeats, and make the beſt retreat poſſible. Unpoliſhed nations, though they have more fierceneſs in the onſet, never act with that cool, perſevering reſolution, which enſures victory. This can be acquired only where diſcipline and ſubordination have long prevailed; and a nation, however brave, levied in haſte, will probably never make a figure againſt veteran troops, hardened by contention, or elated by long ſucceſs. This was the diſpoſition of the inhabitants; but the face of the country rendered them ſtill more open to every invader: it was plain and open, without towns, fortreſſes, or any place of retreat to ſecure from an enemy, except what the foreſts might happen to afford. In a word, the inhabitants were deſtitute of all means of defence, but what their native courage was able to ſupply, or a love of liberty might inſpire.

Such

Such were the people and cuſtoms of Britain, when the Romans firſt invaded their iſland under the enſigns of Julius Cæſar, the greateſt commander that ever led an army. When I conſider this great man, who had already been the conqueror of Gaul; when I reflect on his courage, his conduct, and perſeverance; when I take into my view the troops he headed, inured to diſcipline, and fighting in a manner with which barbarous nations were entirely unacquainted; when I conſider theſe circumſtances, and compare them with thoſe of the Britons in the ſame period, I feel a more than uſual ſhare of ſurpriſe at the bravery and conduct with which theſe poor barbarians oppoſed him. *Anno Ante C.* 55.

It was an eſtabliſhed maxim, in the politics of Rome, to deem all auxiliaries as principals, and to allow none to aſſiſt the enemies of the ſtate with impunity. This was the pretence Cæſar laid hold of to juſtify his invaſion of England, which was not only looked upon as an ally, but likewiſe as an aſylum to the Gauliſh nations, which were at that time enemies of Rome. This might, probably, be the ground of his invaſion, but the pleaſure of conqueſt was his real motive. To extend the Roman empire, though already too extenſive to be governed, was at that time thought the moſt glorious achievement of humanity. The reſt of Europe was, in ſome meaſure, ſubdued, and nothing left but countries deſolate with foreſts and marſhes, and neither tempting from their appearance, nor affording any hopes of plunder. Heroiſm was, at that time, the boaſt of ambition: nor have men, till very lately, been taught to conſider conquerors with an eye of contempt or de-

teſtation. Cæſar was reſolved on being a hero, and was more fond of triumph than of juſtice.

His forces were compoſed of Germans, Batavians, and Gauls, and veteran Roman legions. He ſet ſail from Gaul about midnight, and arrived on the Britiſh coaſt the next afternoon. The Britons, with their naked troops, made a brave oppoſition againſt this vereran army: the conflicts between them were fierce and many, the loſſes were mutual, and the ſucceſs various. Caſſibelaunus was choſen general in chief of the Britiſh forces; but even a foreign invader was not ſufficient to keep the petty princes, who commanded the barbarous army, united. Diſſenſion ſoon entered among them, and ſome, jealous of the ſincerity of their general, or envying his greatneſs, fled over to Cæſar, ſubmitted to the Romans, and claimed their prorection: others followed this baſe example, till Caſſibelaunus, weakened by ſo many deſertions, reſolved upon making what torms he was able, while he had yet au opportunity. He ſends to Cæſar, acknowledges the Roman power, agrees upon a certain tribute, and delivers hoſtages. Thus we ſee Britain, from the beginning, remarkable for internal diſſenſion; and diſſenſion ever ſtrengthens or invites the invader.

The Romans were pleaſed with the name of a new conqueſt, and glad of ending an adventure with honour, which at firſt promiſed only difficulties and danger. But the extended foreſt, and the trackleſs wild, was not a quarry for men intent on ſpoil, and raiſed to greater expectations. Having, therefore, rather diſcovered than ſubdued the ſouthern parts of the iſland, the Romans returned into Gaul, with their whole forces, and once more

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left the Britons to their cuſtoms, religion, and laws. By two expeditions which Cæſar made into this iſland, he rather encreaſed the glory than the dominions of Rome, and gave Britain the honour of being the laſt triumph of that mighty republic, which had before reduced the moſt powerful kingdoms of the habitable globe.

Whatever the tribute was, which they had contracted annually to pay, we have many reaſons, from hiſtory, to believe they paid it but very negligently. I mention this, as an inſtance of the little faith which can be expected from an extorted ſubmiſſion, while there is no longer a power to enforce obedience. Upon the acceſſion of Auguſtus, that emperor had formed a deſign of viſiting Britain, but was diverted from it by an unexpected revolt of the Pannonians. Some years after, he again reſumed his deſign; but, being met in his way by the Britiſh ambaſſadors, promiſing the accuſtomed tribute, and making the uſual ſubmiſſions, he a ſecond time deſiſted. The year following, finding them unfaithful to their promiſe, he prepared, a third time, for the invaſion of this iſland, but was prevented from putting his deſign into execution, by their ambaſſadors, who everted his fury by their adulations and humility. The moſt ſavage countries underſtand flattery almoſt as well as the moſt polite, ſince to be ſufficiently ſervile is, perhaps, the whole of the art, and the trueſt method of pleaſing.

Tiberius followed the maxims of Auguſtus, and, wiſely judging the Roman empire already too extenſive, made no attempt upon this iſland. Some Roman ſoldiers being wrecked on the Engliſh coaſt, the inhabitants not only aſſiſted them with the greateſt humanity, but ſent them, in ſafety,

back to their general. In conſequence of ſuch friendly diſpoſitions, there was a conſtant intercourſe between the two nations; the principal Engliſh nobility reſorted to Rome, and ſome received their education there.

By theſe means the Britons began ſenſibly to improve. The firſt art, which a ſavage people is generally taught by their politer neighbours, is that of war. Though not wholly addicted to the Roman manner of fighting, the Britons, however, adopted ſeveral of their improvements, both in their arms and their arrangement in the field. Their ferocity to ſtrangers was now alſo leſſened, and the firſt began to coin money, the oldeſt Britiſh coin being that of Comius, who learned a part of the Roman politeneſs by a reſidence in Cæſar's camp. They ſtill, however, continued to live as herdſmen and hunters, and adhered to their uſual ſuperſtitions; a manifeſt inſtance of the country being, as yet, but thinly inhabited. When we read, in Cæſar, of the numbers of this people, and the vaſt armies they brought into the field, I am apt to doubt his veracity. Such armies could ſcarcely be levied, even now; and yet nothing is more certain, than that Britain is at leaſt ten times more populous now than it was at that time. A nation of herdſmen and hunters can never be very populous; their ſubſiſtence takes up a large tract of country, while the huſbandman converts every part of nature to human uſe, and produces the greateſt quantity of ſubſiſtence from circumſcribed poſſeſſion. The Roman hiſtorian has increaſed their numbers, only to increaſe the luſtre of his glory in ſubduing them.

LETTER V.

THE second expedition into Britain was made by Claudius, under the conduct of Plautius, and pursued by Ostorius, and other Roman commanders, with the usual success. It is true, there were many Britons who preferred their hardy simplicity to imported elegance, and, rather than offer their necks to the Roman yoke, presented their breasts to the sword. But, by degrees, their fierceness was subdued, or wholly destroyed; the southern coast, with all the adjacent inland country, was secured by the conquerors, who took possession by fortifying camps, building fortresses, and planting colonies. The rest of the country seemed to look on, patiently waiting till it became their turn to be expelled from their precarious habitations, or to receive their emperious masters. *A. D.* 50.

Prosperity, in general, breeds insolence; the corruption of the prætors and officers, that were appointed to govern this harassed people, once more roused them into resentment. Caractacus, general and king of the northern Britons, with inferior numbers, not only made a brave defence, but often seemed to claim a doubtful victory. A drawn battle might be considered as a triumph, to a people only used to defeat. He continued nine years to hold out, and threatened fatal dangers to the Roman colonies. At length, however, in a decisive battle, the Britons were totally defeated, and Caractacus taken prisoner. His exclamation, when led in triumph through Rome, is too remarkable to be passed over in silence. Observing the

opulence, ſplendor, and luxury of that great city, *Alas!* cried he, *how is it poſſible, that people, poſſeſſed of ſuch magnificence at home, could envy me an humble cottage in Britain?*

One expiring effort more was made by the Britons, to recover their liberty in the times of Nero. *A. D.* 78. Paulinus, the general of the Romans, going with the greateſt part of his forces to ſubdue the iſle of Angleſey, where the ſuperſtitions of the Druids were ſtill practiſed with all their horrid circumſtances; the Britons, preſuming upon his abſence, made a general inſurrection under Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, whom the Romans had treated with ſhocking indignities, condemning her, for ſome ſlight offence, to be whipped, and her daughters to be raviſhed by the ſoldiery: in revenge, therefore, at the head of a numerous army, ſhe fell upon the Romans, wherever they were defenceleſs, took their caſtles, deſtroyed the chief ſeats of their power at London and Verulam, and, ſuch was the ſlaughter, that ſeventy thouſand fell by this revolt. Paulinus, however, ſoon returned with his army, encountered the Britiſh forces headed by their queen, overthrew their powers, and purſued his victory with a ſlaughter of eighty thouſand men, while the conquered queen poiſoned herſelf in diſpair. Here ended the liberties of Britain. All that now remained were ſatisfied to exchange freedom for life. This was their laſt ſtruggle: they now loſt, not only the hopes, but even the deſire, of vindicating the privileges of nature.

From this time the Romans ſeemed more deſirous of ſecuring what they poſſeſſed, than of making new conqueſts: they ſeparated the Roman province, by a wall, from the Picts, their barbarous

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and reſtleſs neighbours; and attempted to humanize the fierceneſs of thoſe who acknowledge their power. The Roman laws and cuſtoms, habits and arms, language and manners, baths and feaſts, ſtudies and learning, were introduced and became general. A conduct ſo prudent, which had been firſt begun by Agricola, was purſued by his ſucceſſors with ſo much ſucceſs, that the Romans had little trouble afterwards in Britain, except in the defence of their northern frontier.

Had Rome continued peaceable miſtreſs of the world, the Britons, now almoſt perfectly civilized, might have found means of being happy. But, upon the diviſions of the Roman empire, which was ruled by faction, and governed by an inſolent ſoldiery, torn by ſedition at home, and ſubject to invaſion abroad, the Britiſh legions were, at ſeveral times, called over into Gaul, and, with them, great numbers of the braveſt of the Britiſh youth. Thus we ſee every method purſued, to weaken and render this once hardy people effeminate. The arts of luxury were introduced to ſoften their minds; they were denied the uſe of arms, which might ſtill uphold their native bravery; the flower of their youth were, at intervals, drained away, and thoſe that remained were bred up in ſervitude and ſubjection. All who had a paſſion for liberty were long ſince deſtroyed; and none were ſuffered to live, but ſuch as had betrayed their country in the beginning, or had been too cowardly to reſiſt an unjuſt invaſion. It is no wonder, therefore, that, as the Roman forces decreaſed in Britain, the Picts became more bold in their incurſions. Theſe, probably, were the deſcendants of ſuch Britons as once bravely exchanged their country for freedom, and croſſing the narrow ſea, which

the Romans could not guard, in little boats of wicker covered with leather, they filled the country wherever they came, with ſpoil, ſlaughter, and deſolation: when repulſed by ſuperior numbers, they uſually retired loaded with ſpoils, and watched for the next opportunity of invaſion, when the Romans were drawn away into the remoter parts of the iſland.

Theſe enterpriſes were often repeated, and as often repreſſed, till, in the reign of Valentinian the younger, the empire of Rome began to tremble for its capital. Myriads of barbarous nations, under the names of Goths and Vandals, invaded the dominion of this miſtreſs of the world, with terror, perſeverance, and rapidity. All the Roman legions were now, therefore, drawn from Britain, and all the Britons, who were fit for military ſervice, were brought away to relieve the emperor, who was purſued by the Goths into Piedmont, and there beſieged in Aquilea, a town he attempted to defend.

The Romans, now taking their laſt leave of this province, left the Britons to their own government, and the choice of their own kings. For the exerciſe of their arms, and for repairing their ramparts they gave them the beſt inſtructions ſuch terrible times would permit. Nothing can be more affecting than the picture of Britain at that period: though the Roman ſoldiery were drawn away, their families and deſcendants were ſtill ſpread over the whole country, and left without a ſingle perſon, of conduct or courage, to defend them. The Britons who remained began to enter into freſh diſſenſions for ſuperiority; the enemy continued to pour in greater numbers than ever, from their native foreſts and mountains: famine, with all its horrid attendants,

dants, of diſeaſe, robbery, and ſedition, increaſed the miſerable picture of the times: their vices, as Gildas, a cotempotary writer, obſerves, kept pace with their calamities, the whole forming one deteſtable group of cowardice, cruelty, and diſtreſs.

In this terrible ſituation it was, that they implored the aſſiſtance of the Romans for relief. Their letter upon this occaſion ſtill remains upon record: *To Ætius, thrice Conſul. The groans of the Britons. Driven by our barbarous enemy to the ſea, and from thence back upon the barbarians, we have only left us the choice of a grave: either to be killed by the one, or to be drowned by the other.* The Romans, however, were unable to help themſelves, much leſs capable of giving ſuccour to ſo remote, and, at preſent, ſuch unſerviceable allies. *A.D.*448.

Yet, amidſt ſuch calamities, this people ſeemed to have ſtill a peculiar happineſs in ſtore; for they had, in general, embraced Chriſtianity. At what time the Goſpel was firſt preached in this iſland is not known, nor is it material to know: it is certain, that the original natives of England converted their pagan conquerors ſome time after to the lights of revelation; and though this people received laws from others, they adorned them with the religion of truth.

Arts, arms, and elegance, muſt take their riſe, by ſlow degrees, in every country, and can never be, at once, introduced into it with ſucceſs. All the pains beſtowed in Britiſh education, only ſerved to render this people more miſerable; dreſſed them up as victims for every invader, and plunged them in all the miſery of knowing happineſs without being able to practiſe refinement. The people of a country juſt reclaimed from barbarity, in ſome

measure, resemble the soil. The cultivation of a few years may be sufficient to clear away the obstacles to agriculture, but it requires several ages before the land acquires a proper degree of fertility. Thus all the blood and treasure, which the Romans lost in the conquest of Britain, in the end only served to depopulate the country, and prepare it for new invaders. The Roman politics succeeded in quelling British courage; but the inhabitants, deprived of that, seemed destitute of every virtue.

LETTER VI.

I Remember but few instances in history, where the conquerors did not excel the people conquered in every virtue. Savage barbarity, or effeminate luxury, have almost ever been imputed to those countries which were obliged to admit a foreign invader. There is a period between natural rudeness and excessive refinement, which seems peculiarly adapted for conquest and war, and fits mankind for every virtuous and great achievement. In this state of half-refinement, the Saxons were at the time in which the Britons were thus distressed. This virtuous and warlike people had conquered wherever they came, and to them the wretched remains of the forlorn Britons had recourse for protection.

As the conquest of this island is generally imputed to the Saxons as a piece of treachery, and an invasion of those rights they were only called in to protect, I shall give the invitation they received from the Britons, as it hath been left as by Witti-chindus, a cotemporary historian of credit; and from hence it may be judged what little right the

Britons

Britons had afterwards to complain: "The poor "and diſtreſſed Britons, almoſt worn out by "hoſtile invaſions, and haraſſed by continual in- "curſions, are humble ſuppliants to you, moſt "valiant Saxons for ſuccour. We are poſſeſſed "of a wide, extended, and a fertile country; "this we yield wholly to be at your devotion and "command. Beneath the wing of your valour "we ſeek for ſafety, and ſhall willingly undergo "whatever ſervices you may hereafter be pleaſed "to impoſe."

The Saxons were one branch of thoſe Gothic nations, which ſwarming from the northern hive, came to give laws and liberty to the reſt of Europe. A branch of theſe, under the name of Suevi, had, ſome time before Cæſar's invaſion of Gaul, ſubdued and poſſeſſed an extenſive empire in Germany. Theſe, for their ſtrength and valour, were grown formidable to all the German nations. The Suevi were reckoned, by their neighbours, a people for whom the very immortal Gods were not a match in war. They were after divided into ſeveral nations, and each became famous for ſubduing the country which it invaded. France, Germany, and England, were among the number of their conqueſts.

The Saxons were far more poliſhed than the ancient inhabitants of Britain, though their acquirements were much inferior to the boaſted refinements of Rome. They dreſſed with ſome degree of elegance, a luxury which was unknown to the Britons; the women uſed linen garments, trimmed and ſtriped with purple; their hair was bound in wreaths, or fell in curls upon their ſhoulders; their arms were bare, and their boſoms uncovered:

faſhions which, in ſome meaſure, ſeem peculiar to the ladies of Britain to this day. Their governments were entirely elective, and nearly republican; their commanders were choſen by merit, and diſmiſſed from duty when their authority was no longer needful. The cuſtom of trying by twelve men is of Saxon original; ſlavery and baſe ſubmiſſion was unknown among them, and they preferred death to a ſhameful exiſtence. We are told, by Marcellinus, that a body of them being taken priſoners by Symmachus, the Roman, he deſigned to exhibit them, in the amphitheatre, as gladiators, for the entertainment of the citizens of Rome. The morning, however, on which they were expected to perform, they were every one found dead in his priſon, each chuſing rather a voluntary death, than to be the ignominious inſtruments of brutal ſatisfaction to their conquerors. The chaſtity of this people is equally remarkable, and to be without children was to be without praiſe: but in war they chiefly excelled; they had, in ſome meaſure, learned diſcipline from the Romans, whom they had often conquered: it was their maxim to eſteem victory as a doubtful advantage, but courage as a certain good. A nation, however, entirely addicted to war, muſt, conſequently, be addicted to cruelty; and thoſe terrors, which a man is taught not to fear himſelf, he is ſeldom afraid of inflicting on ſociety. The Saxons are repreſented as a cruel nation, but their enemies have drawn the picture.

Vortigern, who had been voted king of the diſtreſſed Britons, eaſily induced thoſe conquerors to lend him aſſiſtance. They came over into Britain in great numbers, commanded by Hengiſt and Horſa, of the race of Odin. They marched againſt the

the Picts, and, in conjunction with the Britiſh arms, defeated them in ſeveral encounters, obliging them to retreat into the moſt northern parts of the province. The Saxons, thus finding themſelves evidently the moſt powerful people upon the iſland, ſeemed reſolved to reward themſelves with thoſe parts of it which were moſt to their liking. They firſt obtained conſent from the Britons to ſend over for more forces, under a pretence of guarding their frontier. Theſe ſeated themſelves in the northern provinces, and repreſſed the incurſions of the Picts and Scots with great bravery and ſucceſs. Thoſe nations were, therefore, obliged to bound their territories with the rough and mountainous countries that lie between the two ſeas; and ſuch have, ever ſince, continued the boundaries of England and Scotland. *A. D.* 449.

The province thus ſecured from the common enemy, diſſentions began to ariſe between the Britons and their new allies. The Saxons valued too highly the aſſiſtance they had given, and the Britains, perhaps, under-rated what they had received. In a conteſt of this nature it is natural to imagine, that the ſtronger nation always impoſes laws on the weaker. The Saxons allured by the fertile ſoil and the ſoft climate, continued to invite greater numbers from the continent, and now turned their arms upon the Britons, who vainly attempted to oppoſe them. This contention was ſtill more inflamed by the difference of their opinion in matters of religion, the Saxons being all pagans, and the Britons profeſſing Chriſtianity. At ſuch a time as this, a Chriſtian hero was wanted to vindicate the rights of Chriſtianity; and, probably, merely for this reaſon, fiction has ſupplied us with a Chriſtian hero, King *A. D.* 520.

Arthur,

Arthur, the Britiſh champion, is ſaid to have worſted the Saxons in twelve different engagements; yet notwithſtanding all his victories, and whatever his proweſs might have performed, it did not ſerve to reſcue his country from its new poſſeſſors. The Saxons purſued their deſigns with courage and fierceneſs; new ſwarms of their countrymen came continually over, till, at length, in about a century and an half, they had ſubdued the whole body of the province, and eſtabliſhed in it ſeven different kingdoms, which were, by the writers of thoſe times, ſtyled the Saxon Heptarchy.

A. D. 548. The Britons, driven from their ancient poſſeſſions, to eſcape the fury of the conquerors, retired to the mountainous parts of Wales and Cornwall; countries barren and deſolate, but in ſome meaſure, ſurrounded by the ſea, and towards the land difficult of acceſs. Some great colonies of them, wholly abandoning their native country, ſailed over to the neighbouring ſhores of France, where poſſeſſing new ſeats, they gave a new denomination to that peninſula, which ſtill preſerves the name and memory of Britain there, a name no longer continued at home.

All the poſſeſſions of the Britons now fell into the power of the conquerors, who began to loſe their natural fierceneſs, and ſoften into the luxuries of thoſe they had invaded. Though conquerors ever bring their own cuſtoms among the people they ſubdue, they, at the ſame time, aſſume ſome cuſtoms from thoſe they have conquered. The Saxons now loſt all that ſpirit of freedom their nation had been long famous for, and, in imitation of the Britons themſelves, among whom ſlavery was permitted ſince the times of the Romans, they made the people of Britain ſlaves.

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Theſe wretches were uſed in tilling the ground, feeding cattle, and other ſervile works; farming out lands at a certain yearly ſtipend, but always held at the will and pleaſure of the landlord. The children of this miſerable people belonged to the ſoil, like the reſt of the ſtock or cattle upon it; and thus began villanage in England, an horrid cuſtom, borrowed from the Romans originally, and derived now to the Saxons by vicious imitation.

The Saxons, now no longer fearing domeſtic foes, relaxed into luxury and vice, and, finding no other enemies to ſubdue, began to fight with each other. The princes of the ſeven kingdoms they had erected began mutually to emulate each other's power, and, for the ſpace of above two hundred years, all the miſery that ambition, treachery, or war, could bring upon a kingdom, was the conſequence of their animoſity. The diſſentions of petty princes are evermore diſtreſsful to a people, than the wars of extenſive empires. The hiſtorians of this period are as barbarous as the tranſactions they deſcribe; but it is ſufficient to know, that after many various events and revolutions between the ſeveral races of the heptarchy, Ecbert, deſcended from the Weſt-Saxon kings, partly by conqueſt, and partly by inheritance, became the firſt ſole monarch of England. This was the name which the country now aſſumed, to diſtinguiſh it from the principality of Wales, poſſeſſed by the ancient Britons; and from that part of the iſland north of the Tweed, poſſeſſed by the Picts and Scots, called Scotland.

No cuſtoms, truly Britiſh or Roman, were now to be ſeen: the language of the country, which had been

been either Latin or Celtic, was discontinued, and the Saxon or English only was spoken. The land, before divided into colonies or governments, was now cantoned into shires, with Saxon appellations to distinguish them. Their habits in peace, and arms in war, their titles of honour, laws, and methods of trial, were all continued, as originally practised by the Suevi; but their commonwealths were now no more: these were changed for despotic and hereditary monarchies; and their exemplary chastity and their abhorrence of slavery, were quite forgotten. The conquerors were corrupted by prosperity. They became Christians, indeed, by the preaching of Austin the monk; but this little improved their manners: twelve hundred British monks, who would not acknowledge Austin for a saint, are said to have been slaughtered by order of these new converted Christians, in a field near Caerleon.

Christianity, when erroneously taught, is even more injurious to society than paganism; in all the sacrifices to the British idols, or the Saxon god Woden, I have not read of such a multitude of victims offered together. The devotion of this people, however, was equal to their ignorance. Their kings frequently abdicated the crown for the cowl; their queens thought it meritorious, tho' joined in wedlock, to continue in virginity; and some for this erroneous practice, after their death, were canonized as saints.

At this period, namely, the seventh century, the arts and sciences, which had been before only known in Greece and Rome, were disseminated over Europe, where they sufficed, indeed, to raise the people above natural and savage barbarity, but then they lost their own splendor by the transplantation. The English, at the time I am now speaking

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ing of, might be conſidered as polite, if compared to the naked Britons at the invaſion of Cæſar. The houſes, furniture, cloaths, meetings, and all the luxuries of ſenſe, were almoſt as great then as they are at preſent; they were only incapable of ſentimental pleaſure: all the learning of the times was conſigned to the clergy, and little could be expected from their efforts, ſince their principal tenet was to diſcard the lights of reaſon. An eclipſe was, even by their hiſtorians, talked of as a dangerous omen of threatened diſtreſſes; and magic was not only believed poſſible, but, what is more ſtrange, there were ſome who even fancied they underſtood magic. In ſhort, this whole period was tiſſued over with ignorance, cruelty, and ſuperſt tion; and the kingdom ſeemed united under one monarch, only the more readily to admit a new invader.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

IT might have reaſonably been expected, that a fortunate prince, as Ecbert had always been, at the head of ſo large an united kingdom, after the expulſion of the Picts, Scots, and Britons, ſhould not only have enjoyed the fruits of peace, but even have left tranquillity and happineſs to his moſt diſtant poſterity: yet, ſuch is the inſtablity of human affairs, and the weakneſs of man's beſt conjectures, that Ecbert was ſcarcely ſettled in his throne, when the whole kingdom was alarmed by the approach of an unexpected enemy, fierce, barbarous, and brave. About *A. D.* 819, this time a mighty ſwarm of thoſe nations which had poſſeſſed the countries bordering on the Baltic, began,

began, under the names of Danes and Normans, to infeſt the weſtern coaſts of Europe, filling the places wherever they came with ſlaughter and devaſtation. It is remarkable enough, that the people whom they ſpoiled were no other than colonies of their own countrymen, who had migrated ſome centuries before, and plundered thoſe very countries where they were now themſelves plundered in turn. The Normans fell upon the northern coaſts of France; the Danes chiefly levelled their fury at England, and entering the Thames with an incredible number of ſhips, carried away all that could neither be defended, nor withdrawn from the ſuddenneſs of the invaſion.

A.D. 832.

The weak oppoſition the Danes met with from the Engliſh, only ſerved to invite them to renew their depredations, and make freſh attempts the ſucceeding ſeaſon. The braveſt blood of the Engliſh had been already exhauſted in civil war, under the diſſenſions of the Saxon heptarchy; and, when thoſe wars were terminated, pilgrimages, penances, cloiſters, and ſuperſtitions, ſerved to enfeeble the remainder. Thus the Saxons were become as unable to make oppoſition againſt the Danes, as the Britons were to oppoſe the Saxons heretofore: they therefore bought off their invaders with money; a remarkable inſtance how much they had degenerated from their warlike anceſtors. The money which was thus extorted, only increaſed the avarice and the ſtrength of the enemy. It was alſo raiſed by the kings from exactions on the people: this cauſed new diſcontent, and ſerved to haſten the fall of their thrones, which already began to totter.

This century, however, did not paſs without various ſucceſs, and doubtful fortune, between the two contending nations. No leſs than twelve battles

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are ſaid to have been fought in one year. The Danes divided their forces into ſeveral camps, removed them from one part of the country to another, as they were forced by neceſſity, invited by hopes of ſpoil, or induced by the weakneſs and diviſions of the enemy. They fortified poſts and paſſages, built caſtles for the defence of their borders, and the whole country was, in ſome meaſure, covered with their redoubts, the veſtiges of which remain to this day. This manner of fortifying the country, and the difference of religion, ſeem to be the only cuſtoms in which the Danes differed from the Saxons they had invaded. They were both originally from the ſame country, and their manners conſequently the ſame.

The ſimilitude of language, laws, and manners, ſoon produced an intercourſe between both nations; and, though they ſtill were enemies, the Danes gradually began to mingle among the people of England, and ſubmit to the laws and kings of the country they had partly ſubdued. But what concord could be expected between Chriſtians, as the Engliſh then were, and pagans, for ſuch the Danes ſtill continued? Wherefore, though the Engliſh, in ſome meaſure, admitted the Danes, yet, ſtill, they hated them: this produced frequent conteſts, which moſt frequently laid the country in blood.

In this period of cruelty, jealouſy, and deſolation, a man ſeemed raiſed up to his bleeding country, to defend its rights, improve the age in which he lived, and even to adorn humanity. *A. D.* 872. Alfred the Great was the fourth ſon of Ethelwolfe, king of England, and had received the earlier part of his education under the inſpection of pope Leo, in Rome, which was at that time the chief ſeat of arts and learning in Europe. Upon the death of his elder brother, Ethelred, he was called

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to the Engliſh throne, of which he was only nominally put in poſſeſſion, the country being over-run by the Danes, who governed with cruelty and pride.

His reign began with wars, and he was forced into the field immediately upon his coronation. His firſt battles were fought with ſucceſs; but at length, being overpowered by a Daniſh combination, the unfortunate Alfred was obliged to ſeek ſafety by flight. In this manner, being abandoned by the world, without ſuccour, and fearing an enemy in every face, the royal fugitive was reſolved not to forſake his country, as was uſual with his predeceſſors. He retired to the cottage of a cowherd, in a ſolitary part of the country of Somerſet, at the confluence of the rivers Parret and Thone: here he lived ſix months as a ſervant, and, as we are told, was ſometimes reproved for his indolence, by his miſtreſs, the cowherd's wife. The earl of Devonſhire was alone privy to the place of his retreat; and happening to overthrow a body of the Danes, acquainted Alfred with the news of his ſucceſs.

Alfred now, therefore, began to conſider how to turn the preſent conſternation of the enemy to his own advantage. He appriſed his friends of the place of his retreat, and inſtructed them to be ready, with what troops they could raiſe, upon a minute's warning; but ſtill none was found who would undertake to give intelligence of the forces or poſture of the enemy. Not knowing, therefore, whom to confide in, he undertook this dangerous taſk himſelf: in the ſimple dreſs of a ſhepherd, with an harp in his hand, he entered the Daniſh camp, had admiſſion to the principal generals, and was allowed to excel upon that inſtrument. He ſoon perceived that the enemy weredivided amoung themſelves: he ſeiſes the favourable moment, flies to the

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earl of Devonſhire, heads his troops, forces their camp, and gains a complete victory.

Alfred knew the arts of negociation as well as thoſe of war: he had ſufficient addreſs to cauſe himſelf to be acknowledged king by the Danes, as well as his own natural ſubjects. London ſtill remained to be ſubdued: he beſieged it, took and fortified it in a manner which was then thought impregnable. He fitted out a fleet, kept the Danes in his dominions under proper ſubjection, and repreſſed the invaſions of others from abroad. His next care was to poliſh that country by the arts of peace, which he had ſubdued by the arts of war. He is ſaid to have drawn up a body of laws; but thoſe which remain to this day, under his name, ſeem to be no more than laws already practiſed in the country by his Saxon anceſtors, and to which, probably, he gave his ſanction. The trials by juries, mulcts and fines for offences, by ſome aſcribed to him, are of a much more ancient date than his reign. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that the penal laws of our anceſtors were mild and humane. As a nation becomes more polite, the penal laws become more numerous and ſevere, till, at length, growing intolerable to the poor againſt whom they are principally levelled, they throw off the yoke of legal bondage, either by admitting a deſpotic prince, or by taking the government into their own hands by military invaſion. I remember few great characters in hiſtory, that had not a regard for the ſciences. Alfred is ſaid to have founded the univerſity of Oxford, and ſupplied it with books from Rome. The ſpirit of ſuperſtition had quite ſuppreſſed all the efforts of philoſophy at this period. He is ſaid to have lamented, that no prieſt, in all his dominions, underſtood Latin. As for him,

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he knew it, and was alſo well verſed in the geometry of thoſe barbarous ages. He was an excellent hiſtorian, made ſome tranſlations from the Latin which ſtill ſubſiſt, and it is even ſaid that he compoſed ſome excellent poems in the Saxon language. Thoſe hours which he could take from buſineſs, he gave to ſtudy. He was a complete œconomiſt, and this gave him an opportunity of being liberal. His care even extended to the manner in which the people built their houſes. Before his time, the generality of the nation made uſe, moſtly, of timber in building: Alfred having raiſed his palaces with brick, the nobility, by degrees, began to imitate his example.

From this time, though the reigns immediately ſucceeding are marked with ignorance, ſuperſtition and cruelty, yet, in general, hiſtory puts on a form leſs ſevere: the whole nation ſeems to emerge into a greater degree of politeneſs than it had before enjoyed. The coins of this period are better ſtruck than thoſe of preceding princes. The marine, in his time, ſeems firſt to have given riſe to our claim to the ocean. In ſhort, from this period Engliſh hiſtory may properly be ſaid to commence, and our conſtitution to take its riſe. We are connected with the events previous to Alfred's reign only by motives of curioſity, but with thoſe that follow him by the more prevailing inducements of intereſt.

This great man died in the year 900, in the 52d year of his age, after a reign of more than twenty-eight years; the firſt part ſpent in war and diſtreſs, the latter in peace and proſperity.

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LETTER VIII.

HIſtorians and critics are fond of repreſenting the period which ſucceeded Alfred as entirely barbarous; yet there are many traces of both erudition and politeneſs in thoſe very ages which have been particularly called obſcure. In the reign of his ſucceſſor, Edward, we find gallantry, which is one of the beſt marks of politeneſs in any country, not entirely unknown: his amours with Egwina, who, though by birth a ſhepherd's daughter, received an education becoming a princeſs, and at length, ſubdued the heart of Edward, is a remarkable inſtance of the power the fair ſex then enjoyed. In this reign, too, the univerſity of Cambridge was founded. The famous Scotus flouriſhed at this time; a man whoſe learning appears amazing, even to an age which prides itſelf upon its erudition.

In the reign of Athelſtan, who ſucceeded Edward, the Bible was tranſlated into Saxon; a work which evinces how juſt the opinion is with regard to religion, and the learning of that age. Alliances alſo on the continent were formed by this monarch: it is ſaid he was equally feared by his neighbours, and loved by the greateſt princes of Europe. *A. D.* 924.

We find little remarkable in the reign of Edmund I. but that the firſt capital puniſhment was inſtituted by him. He had remarked, that fines and pecuniary puniſhments were too gentle methods of treating thoſe who were convicted of robberies, who generally were men who had nothing to loſe; he therefore ordered, that, in gangs of robbers, the oldeſt

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of them ſhould be condemned to the gallows. This was reckoned a very ſevere law at the time it was inſtituted. What would our anceſtors ſay, upon ſeeing the penal laws now uſed by their poſterity?

The death of this monarch is too remarkable to be paſſed without notice. His virtues, abilities, wealth, and temperance, promiſed a long and happy reign; when, on a certain day, as he was ſolemnizing a feſtival in Glouceſterſhire he ſaw a malefactor, whoſe name was Leolf, (who had been baniſhed the kingdom for his crimes,) ſitting at one of the tables in the hall where the king was at dinner. Enraged at ſuch inſolence, he commanded him to be apprehended; but perceiving him drawing his dagger, in order to defend himſelf, the king ſtarted up in a rage, and catching him by the hair, dragged him out of the hall. In the mean time, Leolf, who had drawn the dagger, lifting his arm, with a furious blow ſtabbed the monarch to the heart, who fell down on the boſom of his murderer.

The Danes, during theſe three reigns, were kept within proper bounds: they frequently revolted, were ſubdued, and treated with lenity by the conquerors. The monks now began to have the direction of affairs, and, conſequently, to enfeeble the ſtate.

Edred ſucceeded Edmund, and began his reign with ſome victories over the Scotch and Danes, which the monks were ſkilful enough to aſcribe to the miraculous interpoſition of heaven. Among the number, Dunſtan, abbot of Glaſtonbury, had peculiar influence over the mind of the credulous monarch, and, at length, became the director of the affairs of the kingdom. By this means the monks acquired ſuch power, as

A. D. 946.

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ſerved to retard the vigour of every future operation againſt the Danes. However, that they took from the real ſtrength of their country, they returned in appellations of honour and reſpect. Edred was ſtiled *Monarch of Albion, and King of Britain*; and this at a period when his monarchy was upon the very verge of ruin.

The ſons of Edred were ſet aſide, and Edwy, his eldeſt brother's ſon, was placed on the throne. At this time the crown appears to have been elective, and thoſe elections entirely influenced by the clergy. The ſecular prieſthood ſeems to have placed the crown upon this monarch's head in oppoſition to the monks, who were then riſing into eſteem among the people. Thus were the Engliſh divided by religious diſputes, and involved in all the fury of civil war, while the Danes were every hour growing in ſtrength, and ſending over freſh forces. The ſeculars were poſſeſſed of the riches of the country, but the monks who oppoſed them, were in poſſeſſion of the power of working miracles. Crucifixes, altars, and even horſes were heard to harangue in defence of the monks, and enveigh againſt the ſecular clergy; but particularly Dunſtan the monk had no ſmall power over the hoſts of heaven: his illuminations were frequent, his temptations ſtrong, but he always reſiſted with bravery. The devil, ſay the monks, and that ſeriouſly too, once tempted him in the ſhape of a fine woman; but the ſaint ſoon ſent him off, by catching him by the noſe, and leading him about for public deriſion. Such ſtories were then propagated, and, what is ſtill more extraordinary, were believed. I am the more ſurpriſed at the credulity of the times, as the people certainly were not deſtitute of claſſical learning, and ſome ſkill in the

A. D. 955.

polite arts. We have a Latin ſpeech or two ſtill preſerved, which were ſpoken by their monarchs at that period, replete with elegance, perſpecuity, and good ſenſe.

However that may be, the monks, by the aſſiſtance of miracles, prevailed: Edwy was dethroned, and his brother Edgar placed in his *A. D.* 959. room. Hiſtorians repreſented England under this reign as completely happy; and, it is certain the kingdom ſtill ſeemed to enjoy the fruits of Alfred's wiſdom: for, of all the ages, from the entire decadence of taſte, till its revival in the fifteenth century, this might be termed the Auguſtan. The Engliſh fleets are deſcribed as amounting to above four thouſand ſhips: kings came to Edgar's court, and returned without moleſtation or fear. Muſic, painting, and poetry, were then held as neceſſary accompliſhments to a refined education, as they are at preſent. But his gallantries are peculiarly the ſubject of the hiſtorians of that time, and are ſtill the theme of romance. He is ſaid, firſt, to have debauched a nun, then to have attempted the chaſtity of a nobleman's daughter; but the amour, which is famous to this day, is his adventure with the beautiful Elfrida.

Edgar had long heard of the beauty of a young lady, whoſe name was Elfrida, daughter to the earl of Devonſhire; but, unwilling to credit fame in this particular, he ſent Ethelwolfe, his favourite, to ſee if Elfrida were indeed that incomparable woman report had ſpoken her. Ethelwolfe had no ſooner arrived at the earl of Devonſhire's, and caſt his eyes upon that nobleman's beautiful daughter, but he became de perately enamoured of her himſelf: ſuch was the violence of his paſſion, that, forgetting his maſter, he demanded

manded the beautiful Elfrida for his own wife. His requeſt was granted; the favourite of a king was not likely to find a refuſal, and they were married in private. Returning ſoon after to court, he aſſured the king, that Elfrida was much inferior to the repreſentations that had been made of her, and he was amazed how the world could talk ſo much of her charms. The king was ſatisfied, and no longer felt any curioſity. Ethelwolfe, therefore, after ſome time, perceiving the king perfectly indifferent with regard to the lady, repreſented to his majeſty, one day, that, though the fortune of the earl of Devonſhire's daughter would be a trifle to a monarch, yet it would be an immenſe ſum to a needy ſubject; and therefore he humbly prayed leave to pay his addreſſes to her, as being the greateſt heireſs in the kingdom. A requeſt, ſo ſeemingly reaſonable, was readily complied with. Ethelwolfe returned to his wife, and their nuptials were ſolemnized in public. He had the precaution, however, of not permitting her to appear at court, before a king ſo ſuſceptible of love, while ſhe was ſo capable of inſpiring paſſion. Notwithſtanding all theſe precautions, it was impoſſible to keep his treachery long concealed. Favourites are never without private enemies, who deſire an opportunity of riſing upon their ruin. Edgar was informed of all, but, diſſembling his reſentment, he took an occaſion to viſit that part of the country where this miracle of beauty was detained. Accompanied by his favourite, when he was near the place, he told him, he had a curioſity to ſee his wife, of whom he had formerly heard ſo much. Ethelwolfe, thunderſtruck at the propoſal, did all in his power, but in vain, to diſſuade him; all he could obtain was leave to go before, on pretence

of preparing her for the king's reception. On his arrival, he fell at his wife's feet, confeſſing what he had done to be poſſeſſed of her charms; conjured her to conceal, as much as poſſible, her beauty from the king, who was but too ſuſceptible of paſſion. Elfrida promiſed compliance, but, prompted either by vanity or revenge, adorned her perſon with the moſt exquiſite art, and called up all her beauty upon this occaſion. The event anſwered her expectations: the king no ſooner ſaw, but he loved, and was inſtantly reſolved to obtain her. The better to effect his deſign, he concealed his ſenſations from the huſband, and took his leave with a ſeeming indifference. Soon after Ethelwolfe was ſent to Northumberland, upon pretence of urgent affairs; but he never performed the journey: he was found murdered in a wood, by the king's command, who took Elfrida to court, where their nuptials were celebrated with the uſual ſolemnity.

I have been the more explicit in this ſtory, as, in the firſt place, it ſerves to ſhew that ladies were admitted to court in this early period: it alſo demonſtrates, that men and women were never kept ſeparate in England, as in Spain and other countries: it ſtill evinces, that, however polite they might be at the time I am ſpeaking of, there was ſtill a ſavage air, that mixed in every action, and ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed thoſe ages of barbariſm from the civilized ages of Greece and Rome. But to ſtamp the age with ſtill greater rudeneſs, Edgar, who was thus guilty of murder, ſacrilege, and adultery, was placed among the number of ſaints, by the monks who have written his hiſtory.

The defects of Edgar's government fell upon his ſucceſſors: the power of the monks increaſed, and

that

that of the ſtate was diminiſhed in proportion. Every proviſion for the ſafety of the kingdom began to decline; and the remiſſneſs of the Engliſh made way for new incurſions of the Danes, who exacted exorbitant tributes from the kings, and plundered the ſubjects at *A. D.* 975. diſcretion. Edward the Martyr, who had not the leaſt title to ſo glorious an appellation, was crowned king by the ſingle authority of Dunſtan, and conſequently increaſed monkiſh power: he was murdered by order of Elfrida, who ſeems to have the higheſt contraſt, in her own perſon, of the greateſt external charms, and the moſt odious internal deformity.

Ethelred II. finding himſelf unable to oppoſe the Danes, compounded with them for his ſafety: but, ſoon after, being ſtrengthened by an alliance with the Duke of Normandy, he laid a deteſtable ſcheme for maſſacreing all the Danes in the kingdom. This plot was carried on with ſuch ſecrecy, that it was executed in one day, and all the Danes in England were deſtroyed without mercy. A maſſacre, ſo cruel and perfidious, inſtead of ending the long miſeries of this wretched country, only made way for new and greater calamities than before. *A. D.* 1002.

Swayne, king of Denmark, exaſperated by the ſlaughter of his countrymen, and, among the reſt, of his own ſiſter, who was beheaded in Ethelred's preſence, ſoon after landing in England, and filled the whole kingdom with the marks of an horrid vengeance, obliging Ethelred to fly to Normandy for relief. The Engliſh unable to oppoſe, yet unwilling to ſubmit, for a ſhort time groaned under the Daniſh yoke, and again, upon an opportunity given, called their baniſhed monarch back

to his throne. Ethelred returned, but being a weak, as well as a cruel prince, he loſt the hearts of his ſubjects, and, with their love, all his authority. He never, therefore, could recover ſtrength enough to oppoſe the forces and numbers of the Danes, to whom many of the Engliſh nobles, as well as commonalty, had, in his abſence, ſubmitted.

Swayne was the firſt Daniſh monarch who ſwayed the Engliſh ſceptre, but he died before he could be ſaid to come to a peaceable enjoyment of what he had ſo hardly toiled for. His ſon, Canute, however, achieved what the father had begun. Edmund Ironſide, elected by the Engliſh, who was his rival in government, and who ſucceeded Ethelred in this diſputed ſovereignty, continued, for a ſhort time, to oppoſe the progreſs of the Daniſh conqueſts with ſucceſs; but, Canute gaining a bloody victory over the forces of this monarch, he was obliged, firſt to a diviſion of the kingdom, and his untimely death, ſoon after, gave Canute quiet and undiſturbed poſſeſſion of the whole.

A. D. 1017.

This fierce monarch cut off ſome of the royal Saxon line, and forced others into exile. He was at once king of England, Denmark, and Norway; and, from the extent of his dominion, perhaps, rather than from the greatneſs of his mind, received from hiſtorians the title of *Canute the Great*. The end of his life, however, was very different from the beginning: the firſt part of it was marked with invaſion, rapine, and cruelty; the latter was equally remarkable for juſtice, humanity, and religion. Upon a certain occaſion, being deſirous of ſhewing his flatterers how little he deſerved the exaggerated praiſe with which they loaded him, he ordered a chair to be brought, and, ſeating himſelf on the ſea ſhore, where the tide was about to flow, he

he addreſſed the ſea in this manner: *O ſea, thou art under my dominion, and the land which I ſit upon is mine; I charge thee, approach no further, nor dare to wet the feet of thy ſovereign.* The tide, however, advancing as uſual, he turned to his courtiers, and obſerved, that the titles of Lord and Maſter only belonged to him whom both earth and ſeas were ready to obey.

Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, his Daniſh ſucceſſors, were unworthy of him; the firſt is remarkable for no virtue, and the latter is diſtinguiſhed, principally, for his cruelty and avarice. This laſt, dying ſuddenly, at a feaſt, left the Daniſh race of kings ſo hated, by their exactions and impoſitions on the people, that Edward, ſurnamed the Confeſſor, of the Saxon race, found, both from Danes and Saxons, an eaſy acceſſion to the crown. *A. D.* 1042.

Thus expired, not only the dominion, but all attempts of invaſion from the Danes for the future. Though their ravages had continued for above two hundred years, yet they left no change of laws, cuſtoms, language, or religion. The many caſtles they had built, and the many families they left behind them, ſerved alone to diſcover the places of their eſtabliſhment. After the acceſſion of Edward the Confeſſor to the crown, the Engliſh and Danes, as if wearied with mutual ſlaughter, united in ſupport of each other, formed ever after but one people.

The reign of Edward the Confeſſor was long and happy. He had lived long in Normandy, and, in ſome meaſure, adopted the language and learning of that country. His wars were ſucceſsful, both in Scotland and Wales, though managed

by his leaders, and with his perſonal attendance. The eaſineſs of his diſpoſition, however, together with his credulity and ſuperſtition, paved the way for another invaſion of this country, as if the Engliſh were deſtined to be governed only by foreign maſters.

Earl Godwin, by whoſe intereſt Edward had come to the crown, exerted all his influence to eſtabliſh his own ſon, Harold, as his ſucceſſor. This too powerful ſubject pretended to be much diſpleaſed with the favour ſhewn by the king to the Norman nobility, who came over, in numbers, to the Engliſh court. Theſe diſcontents at length produced an inſurrection. Edward now grown old, and indolent by nature, undertook to oppoſe thoſe diſorders, rather by negociation than arms. Treating with rebels is a certain method of increaſing their power: by this means Harold gained, by degrees, the authority he contended for, and had power ſufficient to ſettle the ſucceſſion upon himſelf.

While Edward was thus leaving his earthly kingdom to contention and miſery, he was, in the mean time, buſily employed in gaining, as he imagined, a heavenly one. It was not ſufficient for him to aſpire at all the virtues neceſſary for carrying him to heaven; he deſired to be reckoned a ſaint of the firſt order. He pretended to ſeveral revelations, was poſſeſſed of the gift of prophecy, and was the firſt who touched for thoſe ſcrophulous diſorders, which, from hence, have been denominated the King's Evil. But what gained him a diſtinguiſhed place among the ſaints, was his continence, his refraining from the woman to whom he was actually married. It is ſaid he eſpouſed the beautiful Editha, purely to exerciſe his

virtues,

virtues, by withſtanding a continual temptation. This, as we may ſuppoſe, left her to ſterility; and thus his leaving no iſſue was the cauſe of numberleſs miſeries which fell upon the kingdom ſoon after his deceaſe.

Edward, as I obſerved, had no children. He ſeemed, however, deſirous of leaving the crown to his nephew Edgar Atheling; but diſtruſting his weakneſs to defend the title, and knowing the ſtrength of Harold, his oponent, he left the ſucceſſion undecided. It is probable, however, this weak monarch was no way ſolicitous who ſucceeded in a government which he ſeemed himſelf to deſpiſe. *A. D.* 1066.

LETTER IX.

UPON the death of Edward, Harold now alledged that he was appointed ſucceſſor by will. This was no more than what the people of England had expected long before: his pretenſions were believed by ſome, and allowed by all. He had ſome right to a crown, hitherto elective, from his private virtues; and he confirmed his rights by the moſt irreſiſtible argument, his power. Thus the monarch came to the throne by the moſt equitable of all titles; I mean the conſent of the people. *A. D.* 1066.

His exaltation ſeemed to be only the commencement of his calamities. His firſt trouble was from his own brother, who, being the elder, obtained aſſiſtance from Norway, to ſet up a title to the Engliſh crown. Harold immediately levied a numerous army, and marched to meet the Norwegians, who, with a vaſt force, had over-run all

the northern parts of the kingdom, and had committed incredible devaſtation. Both armies ſoon joined battle. The Norwegians, for ſome time, bravely defended a bridge which lay between them and the Engliſh; but, at length, the valour of Harold ſurmounted every obſtacle. He paſſed the bridge, renewed the aſſault, and, after an obſtinate reſiſtance, entirely routed the invaders. There had never before been ſeen in England an engagement between two ſuch numerous armies, each having no leſs than threeſcore thouſand men. The news of this victory diffuſed the greateſt joy over the whole kingdom; but their raptures were ſoon ſuppreſſed by an information that William of Normandy, ſurnamed the Conqueror, had landed at Haſtings, with a vaſt body of diſciplined veterans, and laid claim to the Engliſh crown.

Sept. 28, 1066.

The prince was the natural ſon of Robert duke of Normandy: his mother's name was Arlette, a beautiful maid of Falaize, with whom Robert fell in love, as ſhe ſtood gazing at her door whilſt he paſſed through the town. William, who was the offspring of this amour, owed his greatneſs to his birth, and his fortune to his perſonal merit. His body was vigorous, his mind capacious, and his courage not to be intimidated. His father Robert, growing old, and, as was uſual with princes of that age, ſuperſtitious, reſolved upon a pilgrimage to the holy ſepulchre at Jeruſalem. The nobility uſed every argument to diſſuade him, but he perſiſted in his deſign. He ſhewed them William, whom, though illegitimate, he tenderly loved, recommending him to their care and loyalty. He then exacted their homage and fealty to this prince, who was not yet above ten

years

years old; and then put him under the tutelage of the French King, in whom he placed the higheſt confidence.

Robert ſoon after going into Aſia, and dying, left his ſon rather inheritor of his wiſhes than his crown. Our young ſoldier found himſelf expoſed to many dangers, from his youth and inexperience, from the reproach of his birth, from a ſuſpected guardian, a diſputed title, and a diſtracted ſtate. However, he ſurmounted all with uncommon fortitude, nor, till he had eſtabliſhed peace, order, and tranquillity, in his own kingdom, did he turn his ambitious views abroad.

It has been already ſaid, that Edward the Confeſſor reſided for a long time, at the court of Robert duke of Normandy; and upon this William, founded his claim. Whether gratitude might have engaged this exiled prince to make William, his benefactors ſon, any promiſes of the kingdom of England, after his deceaſe, is at this diſtance of time uncertain: William, however, upon the death of Edward, immediately made his pretenſions, and upon his former promiſe of Edward founded all the juſtice of his demand. To this he added, that Harold had himſelf aſſured him of his intereſt in the ſucceſſion, when forced upon the Norman coaſt: he therefore ſent to remind him of fulfilling his engagements.

Harold admitted of neither of theſe claims, and reſolved to defend, by his valour, what he had acquired by his intrigues. He was at the head of a large army, lately victorious, and now confident. He obſerved, that he had been elected by thoſe who only had the power of placing kings on the throne, namely, by the people; and that he could not reſign his crown without a breach of

that truſt repoſed in him by his conſtituents. He added to theſe reaſons one of ſtill greater weight; he was poſſeſſed of power, and knew how to defend it.

William, who had landed his army at Haſtings, in Suſſex, at firſt made no appearance of invading any hoſtile country, but rather of encamping in his own. But he was ſoon rouſed from his inactivity by the approach of Harold, who returned from the defeat of the Norwegians, with all the forces he had employed in that expedition, and all he could invite or collect in the country through which he paſſed. Theſe were in general, brave, active, and valiant troops, in high ſpirits, ſtrongly attached to their king, and eager to engage. The army of William, on the other hand, conſiſted of the flower of all the continent: men of Bretagne, Brabant, Bologne, Flanders, Poictu, Maine, Orleans, France, and Normandy, were united under his command. He had long been familiar with conqueſt, and his troops were confident of his military capacity. England, never before, nor ever ſince, ſaw two ſuch armies drawn up to diſpute a crown. The day before the battle, William ſent an offer to Harold, to decide the quarrel between them by ſingle combat, and thus to ſpare the blood of their people; but Harold refuſed, and ſaid he would leave it to God to determine. Both armies, therefore, that night pitched in ſight of each other, expecting the next terrible day with ſolicitude: the Engliſh paſſed the night with ſongs and feaſting; the Normans in devotions and prayer.

The next morning at ſeven, as ſoon as day appeared, both armies drew up in array againſt each other. Harold appeared leading on the

centre

centre of the Engliſh army, on foot, that his men might be more encouraged by ſeeing their king expoſed to equal danger with themſelves. William fought on horſeback, and commanded the body of reſerve. The Normans began the fight with their croſs-bows: theſe at firſt galled and ſurpriſed the Engliſh, and, as their ranks were cloſe, the arrows did great execution; but when they came to cloſe fight, the Normans were hewn down by the Engliſh bills, which, of all weapons, inflicted the moſt terrible and ghaſtly wounds. William, endeavouring to pierce their ranks, aſſaulted them ſo often, and with ſuch bravery, that he had three horſes killed in the attempt. Perceiving that they ſtill continued impenetrable, he now pretended to fly: this drew the Engliſh from their ranks, and he was inſtantly ready to take advantage of their diſorder. Upon a ſignal given, the Normans returned to the charge with greater fury than before, broke the Engliſh troops, and purſued them to a riſing ground. Harold now flew from rank to rank: though he had toiled all day, from morning till now near night-fall, in the front of his Kentiſh men; yet ſtill he continued, with unabated vigour to renew the fight, and exhort his men by his voice and example. The day now again ſeemed to turn againſt the victors, and the Normans fell in great numbers. The fierceneſs and obſtinacy of this memorable battle was often renewed by the courage of the leaders, wherever that of the ſoldiers began to ſlacken. Fortune, at length, determined a victory that valour was unable to decide: Harold, making a furious onſet at the head of his troops, was ſhot into the brains by an arrow. All the courage

of

of the Engliſh expired with their brave, but unfortunate leader. He fell with his ſword in his hand, fighting for his country, amidſt the heaps of ſlain, ſo that the royal corpſe could hardly, after the battle, be diſtinguiſhed among the dead.

Oct. 14, 1066.

This was the end of the Saxon monarchy in England, which had continued for more than ſix hundred years. Before the times of Alfred, the kings ſeemed totally immerſed in ignorance; and, after him, taken up with combating ſuperſtition, or blindly obeying its dictates. As for the crown, it was rather bequeathed by its poſſeſſor to whom he thought proper, than tranſmitted by hereditary and natural ſucceſſion. As for the laws and cuſtoms of this race, they brought in many of their own, and adopted ſeveral belonging to the ancient Britons and Romans, which they found in the country upon their invaſion. They aſſumed the name of kings, nay, ſome of them took the Greek appellation of Baſileus; titles unknown in the country from whence they came. Their earls were called Dukes, or Duces: a name borrowed from the Romans, and ſignifying captains. The lower claſſes of people were bought and ſold with the farms they cultivated; a cuſtom firſt introduced by the conquerors of the world, and which ſubſiſts, in ſome countries where the Roman laws continue, to this day. Their canon laws, alſo, at that time were often mixed with their civil laws, and were equally coercive; but theſe canon laws had their origin from Rome, and the prieſts and monks, who drew them up, generally had their education there. We muſt not, therefore, aſcribe all the laws and cuſtoms, which at that time prevailed over

ever England, to a Saxon original, ſince they were, in ſome caſes, derived from the Britons and Romans. But now all thoſe cuſtoms and laws, of whatever original, were caſt down into one common maſs, and cemented by thoſe of Norman inſtitution. The whole face of obligation was changed and new maſters and new forms obſerved. The laws were improved, but the taſte of the people for polite learning, arts, and philoſophy, for more than four hundred years to come, were ſtill to continue the ſame. It is indeed ſurpriſing, that, in ſuch a variety of events, ſuch innovations in manners, and ſuch changes in government, true politeneſs never came to be cultivated. Perhaps the reaſon may be, that the people ſuffered themſelves to be inſtructed only by the clergy, and the clergy have a certain ſtandard of politeneſs which they never go beyond, and at which they were arrived at the time we are ſpeaking of. A monk of the tenth century, and a monk of the eighteenth century, are equally enlightened, and equally fit to promote the arts of happineſs.

LETTER X.

WE now enter upon that part of the Engliſh hiſtory which gives birth to our preſent happy conſtitution. Thoſe laws which are ſo much eſteemed by the reſt of Europe, thoſe liberties which are ſo dear to us at home, began to dawn at this period. The Engliſh, hitherto almoſt unknown to the reſt of the world, began, after this revolution, to make a conſiderable figure in Europe. The variety of diſpoſitions of ſeveral foreign countries, being imported here, blended

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into one common national character, and produce ſentiments of courage, freedom, irreſolution, and pride.

Immediately after the victory of Haſtings, in which, it is ſaid, ſixty thouſand Engliſh were ſlain, the conqueror marched towards London. He carried before him a ſtandard which had been bleſſed by the Pope, and to this all the clergy quickly reſorted. The biſhops and magiſtrates of the metropolis came out to meet him, and offered him a crown which they no longer had in their power to refuſe. William was glad of thus peaceably being put in poſſeſſion of a throne which ſeveral of his predeceſſors had not gained but by repeated victories: he complied with the terms, which were offered him, and, among theſe terms, it is to be preſumed, the church's intereſts were not forgotten. Though William had it in his power to force the people into a compliance with his views, yet he choſe to have their election of him confirmed as a voluntary gift of their own. He knew himſelf to be their conqueror; he deſired to be thought their lawful king.

Thus was William poſſeſſed of an idea of his power to enforce obedience, and the Engliſh of their generoſity in having freely preſented him with a crown. Impreſſed with ſuch oppoſite ſentiments, the one was inclined to oppreſs a people whom he, in fact, thought incapable of reſiſtance; and they, on the other hand, were inclined to revolt againſt him, whom they fancied to have received all authority from their own hands. Numberleſs, therefore, were the inſurrections of the Engliſh againſt their new monarch; and every ſuppreſſed rebellion only gave freſh inſtances of the conqueror's mildneſs and

huma-

humanity. The Engliſh were unwilling to pay any taxes towards enriching thoſe they now began to look upon as conquerors; and William was under the moſt ſolemn engagements of providing for thoſe adventurers who had left their native country to place him on the throne.

Hitherto William had acted like one who was rather the father than the invader of the country, when news was brought him, that a body of Northumbrian Engliſh, aſſiſted by the Danes, had ſet upon the Norman garriſon in York caſtle, and put every man to the ſword. After repeated rebellions, which he had quelled before, and ſuch frequent pardons, which were the conſequence, he now found that nothing but rigour would do for the future. He marched therefore to meet the enemy, bought off the Danes for a ſum of money, and took a ſignal revenge upon the Northumbrians, unable to oppoſe him.

From this time he ſeems to have regarded England rather as a conqueſt than a juſtly acquired dominion. His diffidence of the Engliſh became more conſpicuous every day, and his partiality to the Normans more galling: all places of truſt and confidence were taken from the one, and given to the other. From this time he thought only of eſtabliſhing himſelf on the throne, without nicely examining whether the means were conſonant to juſtice and humanity.

If hiſtorians, who ſeem partial in other reſpects, are to be credited, England was then in a moſt deplorable ſituation. The Normans committed continual inſults on the conquered people, and they ſeldom found any redreſs from their governors: in both caſes, therefore, they generally revenged

revenged themſelves by private murders, and a day ſeldom paſſed but the bodies of aſſaſſinated Normans were found in the woods and high-ways, without any poſſibility of bringing the perpetrators to juſtice. But what is repreſented as the peculiar grievance of the times, was, that the Engliſh were deprived of arms, and were forbid having any lights in their houſes after eight o'clock in the evening. At this hour a bell was rung to warn them to put out their fire and candle; and this, which was called the Curfew, is a cuſtom very common upon the continent; but was very grating to the ears of this people.

Inſurrections are ever the conſequence of oppreſſion, in a brave nation: William was ſenſible of this, and generally attempted to moderate the cruel counſels of his countrymen by gentle treatment of the offenders. Edgar Atheling, who had the beſt ſucceſſive right to the crown, was amongſt the number of thoſe who experienced his lenity and faith. This prince had gone over to the Scots, and had perſuaded their king to join him with an army, in aſſerting his right to the Engliſh crown. William met their forces in the northern parts of England, and, inſtead of a battle, propoſed a negociation. Peace was eſtabliſhed between the two nations, and Edgar was included in the treaty. He continued from that time to live as a private man, in opulence and ſecurity, and paſſed the reſt of his life, perhaps, more happily than if he had continued in the career of ambition.

William, having nothing at preſent to fear from war turned all his thoughts to the arts of peace. He was not yet ſufficiently arbitrary to change all the laws now in being for thoſe of his own country:

country: he only made ſeveral innovations, and ordered all law pleas, in the ſeveral courts, to be made in the Norman language. Theſe precautions, inſtead of making the Norman language the ſtudy of all, confined the law to the peculiar ſtudy of a few. The Engliſh language ſtill continued to be ſpoken; and ſuch was the eſteem it was held in, even ſo early, that it began to be ſpoken at the court of Scotland, and in ſeveral adjacent countries: and, what is very remarkable, never was the French leſs engrafted upon our language, than at this very time when they were our maſters.

William now thought proper to deprive biſhops of all judgment in civil cauſes, which they had enjoyed during the whole Saxon ſucceſſion, from their converſion to Chriſtianity. He reſtrained the clergy to the exerciſe of their eccleſiaſtical power alone. He endeavoured to aboliſh trials by *ordeal* and *camp fight*. The ordeal trial, which had been a remainder of Pagan ſuperſtition, and ſtill was held in veneration by the Saxons, was either by fire or water. It was uſed in criminal caſes where the ſuſpicions were ſtrong, but the proofs not evident. In that of fire, the perſon accuſed was brought into an open plain, and ſeveral ploughſhares, heated red hot, were placed at equal intervals before him: over theſe he was to walk blindfold, and, if he eſcaped unhurt, he was acquitted of the charge. In the other trial of water, the accuſed was thrown bound into the water: if he ſunk, he was declared innocent; but if he ſwam, guilty.

The trial by *camp fight* was another inſtance of the deplorable barbarity of the times. This was performed by ſingle combat, in liſts, appointed for that purpoſe, between the accuſer and the accuſed,

accuſed: he that, in ſuch caſe, came off victorious, was deemed innocent; and he who was conquered, if he ſurvived his antagoniſt's reſentment in the field, was ſure to ſuffer as a malefactor ſome time after. Both theſe trials this king aboliſhed as unchriſtian and unjuſt, and reduced all cauſes to the judgment of twelve men, of a rank nearly equal to that of the priſoner. This number was called a jury, and this was a method of trial common to the Saxons and Normans long before, but confirmed by him with all the ſanction of royalty.

Having continued thirteen years in England, he now thought of reviſiting his native dominions; but no ſooner was his back turned than a new conſpiracy was ſet on foot. This was more terrible, as it was carried on by the joint counſels of Normans as well as Engliſh. Several lords, of both nations, already poſſeſſed of opulence, were deſirous of independence alſo, and pretended many grievances, or imagined themſelves aggrieved. The earl Walthof, who had been formerly pardoned for a like offence, entered ſecretly into a correſpondence with Swayne, King of Denmark, and Drone, King of Ireland. Their meaſures were conceived with caution, and purſued with ſecrecy; but ſome delays intervening were fatal to counſels which were neceſſarily entruſted to many: the plot was diſcovered ſome days before the Danes arrived; the heads of the conſpiracy were taken, and Fitz Auber, a noble Norman, and Walthof, were beheaded on this occaſion. Whether this act of rigour was executed by the king's command, ſent over from Normandy, or by Odo, his brother, left behind, and naturally inclined to ſeverity, is not apparent. However, theſe two

were

were the only noblemen executed in England during the reign of William the Conqueror, notwithſtanding ſo many revolts on their ſide, and ſo much power in him to puniſh.

Though good fortune ſeemed to attend this monarch thus far on his reign, here the curtain may be drawn for the reſt. His decline was marked with domeſtic quarrels, which could neither end in glory nor in gain: his endeavours were oppoſed by his own ſubjects, for whom he had laboured with ſuch perſeverance. He had four ſons, Robert, Richard, William, and Henry, beſides ſeveral daughters. The moſt poignant of his diſtreſſes muſt, therefore, come from that quarter where he leaſt expected an attack, and was leaſt guarded to oppoſe. His eldeſt ſon Robert, encouraged by the King of France, pretended a right to poſſeſs Normandy, even during the life of his father. William could place confidence in none but the Engliſh, to bring this unnatural ſon to his duty; and, drawing an army of Engliſhmen together, he paſſed over into Normandy, to put a ſtop to the progreſs of ſo unexpected an inſurrection. It is remarkable enough, that the ſame commander, who formerly led over an army of Normans to conquer England, now returned with an army of Engliſh to ſubdue Normandy. To reduce his ſon, however, was found a much more difficult taſk than William had at firſt expected. Robert ſeemed to inherit, though not his father's virtues, at leaſt his conduct and intrepidity. He led on his troops with courage, and laid his ambuſcades with ſecrecy: in one of theſe, after he had killed part of a troop of Engliſh, and put the reſt to flight, he boldly advanced againſt the main body, where William commanded in perſon. By

a ſtrange

a ſtrange fatality of circumſtances, the father and ſon were oppoſed, without knowing each other. William was now grown old, and unable to perform thoſe extraordinary feats, for which he was once ſo famous. The ſon charged with ſuch fury, that his aged father fell to the ground with the blow: death would inevitably have been the conſequence, and the ſon's arm was juſt lifted to ſtrike his father, had not William called out, and Robert immediately recollected his father's voice. At once ſtung with a conſciouſneſs of his crime and his duty, he leaped from his horſe, and raiſed the fallen monarch from the ground; then, proſtrating himſelf in his preſence, he aſked pardon for his offences, and promiſed, for the future, an adherence to his duty. The king, moved by the impulſe of nature, took once more his long loſt ſon to his arms; and the armies, ſpectators of this moving ſcene, participated in their joy and reconciliation.

But this ſubmiſſion of Robert was of no long continuance; he once had taſted the ſweets of power, and knew not how to ſubmit to ſubordination: again, therefore, he revolted, and again was pardoned by his indulgent father. But the French, who inſpired him to theſe acts of diſobedience, and were at beſt inſidious allies, particularly felt the vehemence of William's diſpleaſure. After he had adjuſted the government of England, to which he was returned ſome time before, he again led over a brave army of Engliſhmen into Normandy intent to make the ſtorm fall upon thoſe who were primarily the diſturbers of his tranquillity. The king of France rightly conſidered, that this armament could only be deſigned againſt himſelf, and attempted to divert it by a truce, which was

agreed

agreed on; but a jeſt of the French king's ſerved to renew hoſtilities. William had been confined to his bed by an indiſpoſition, which, added to his natural corpulency, threatened the moſt dangerous conſequences. This was a ſituation which it was cruelty to ridicule; however, the Frenchman, with a levity natural to his nation, obſerved, that the king of England was lying in of a big belly. This raiſed William's indignation to ſuch a pitch, that he immediately took the field, where leaping a ditch, the pommel of the ſaddle bruiſed his belly, and gave him a rupture. This, added to his former bad habit of body, brought on a mortification, of which he died.

The characters of princes are beſt ſeen in their actions, nor is it neceſſary to give an outline at the end of what the hiſtorian has painted more ſtrongly in his narration. There is ſcarce a great quality which this monarch does not ſeem eminently to have poſſeſſed; and, conſidering the morality of the times, ſcarce a good one in which he was entirely deficient. The only objections of any weight are his avarice, and his depopulating a part of his country, in order to make a foreſt to hunt in for his amuſement. The avarice of kings, at that time, was different from what it is now. Kings acquired money then for the uſes of the public; kings acquire fortunes now only for themſelves: the wars of the ſtate were then ſupplied by the treaſures of the crown; the wars of the ſtate at preſent are ſupplied by finances appropriated to that purpoſe by the people. His making ſo extenſive a foreſt can be vindicated only from the barbarity of the times; a method rather of making his guilt general, than of wiping it away. Upon the whole, however, England ſeemed to improve

prove by the conqueſt, and loſt neither its name nor its language. It increaſed in ſtrength and naval power; its laws became more numerous and rational; the manner of living, among the natives, more elegant and expenſive; and the ſuperſtition of the clergy leſs groſs and abſurd.

LETTER IV.

FEW nations have gone through more revolutions, few governments have appeared more unſteady, or fluctuated more between prerogative and privilege, than this of Great Britain. The Engliſh have been ſurpriſed, betrayed, forced into ſituations little preferable to downright ſlavery; but thoſe convulſions, though they have diſordered the frame, yet could not deſtroy the principles of a free conſtitution.

We have ſeen the Norman alter the whole model of government, but he was unable to extinguiſh the Saxon ſpirit of freedom which formed its ground-work: on the contrary, the Normans, and other ſtrangers who ſettled here, were ſoon ſeiſed with a ſpirit of liberty themſelves, inſtead of being able to communicate their native principles of ſlavery.

William left three ſons: Robert, to whom he bequeathed his dukedom of Normandy; William Rufus, who had the newly acquired kingdom of England; and Henry, who was put in poſſeſſion of the greateſt part of his perſonal treaſures.

A. D. 1087. William Rufus, upon coming to the crown, had two very powerful parties to oppoſe and to humble. The nobility, who ſtill aſpired to the ſame degree of freedom which they

they poſſeſſed under the Saxon kings; and the clergy, who deſired to erect themſelves into a diſtinct government, independent of ſecular power. One or the other of theſe claims gave riſe to the inſurrections and diſcontents of this reign. Nothing can be more eaſy than to imagine, how ill a people, who thought themſelves free, muſt brook a monarch who looked upon them as his property, by a ſucceſſion originally founded in conqueſt.

Odo, his own uncle, was the firſt to diſpute his title; but he was ſoon taken priſoner, and ſome time after contrived means of flying into Normandy, where he found protection and honour from duke Robert. This was a ſufficient pretext for William to make war upon his brother: it was carried on with vigour and ſucceſs. Henry, the third brother, was alſo involved in this war, ſeparately, and upon his own account, having taken up arms for not being paid the treaſures bequeathed him by his father. Thus were there three different armies, each exaſperated againſt the other, and each led on by one of thoſe diſunited brothers. Such an unnatural conteſt, as may be eaſily conceived, ſerved only to weaken themſelves, and ſtrengthen their enemies. The Scots and Welch, therefore, took this opportunity of making ſeveral incurſions upon the Engliſh, while William was thus purſuing conqueſts that could end neither in advantage nor fame. To increaſe the confuſion, the clergy loudly complained of encroachments upon their privileges: the people murmured at every increaſe of their taxes: Robert de Mowbray was actually taken priſoner, while he commanded a fortreſs that had ſhaken off the royal authority. What effects theſe diſcontents, which were increaſed alſo by the king's avarice, intemperance,

and prodigality, might have produced, is uncertain; the moſt melancholy were expected: but now the attention of all Europe was called off to one of the moſt remarkable events that hiſtory can produce; I mean the arming for the firſt cruſade.

Peter, ſurnamed the Hermit, who had beheld, with indignation, the cruel manner to which the infidels, who were in poſſeſſion of the Holy Sepulchre, treated the Chriſtians who went on pilgrimages thither, returned to Europe, reſolved to inſpire the princes of Chriſtendom with a zeal for its recovery. Bareheaded and barefoot, he travelled from court to court, preaching as he went, and inflaming the zeal of every rank of people. Pope Urban II. preached the cruſade himſelf at the counſel of Clermont; and numberleſs perſons, of all degrees and nations, ardently embraced the cauſe, and put on the red croſs, the badge of their profeſſion. Among this number was Robert, duke of Normandy: he was brave, zealous, fond of glory, and ſtill more fond of change. In order to ſupply money to defray the neceſſary charges of ſo expenſive an undertaking, he offered to mortgage his dukedom with his brother for a ſtipulated ſum. William eagerly embraced the propoſal. He was no way ſollicitous about raiſing the money agreed on, for he knew the riches of his clergy: heedleſs, therefore, of their murmurs, he rigorouſly levied the whole, making uſe of the moſt pious pretences to cover his extortion. Thus ſending his brother to the Holy Land, he took peaceable poſſeſſion of his dukedom.

In this manner was Normandy again united to the Engliſh crown; and from this union afterwards aroſe thoſe wars with France, which, for whole centuries, continued to depopulate both nations,

without

without conducing in the end to the enriching of either.

William was not a little pleaſed with this unexpected acquiſition; and, as one ſucceſs only produces a deſire for more, he began to conceive more extenſive ſchemes of ambition. Poictou and Guienne were offered to be mortgaged for the ſame reaſons as Normandy. William immediately raiſed the neceſſary ſums, but death interrupted the payment. Happening to hunt in that foreſt, from whence his father had baniſhed the huſbandman and legal poſſeſſor, he was accidentally ſhot through the heart, with an arrow, by one Tyrell: he died in the forty fourth year of his age, had reigned twelve, and left a dominion which he had contributed to extend, to impoveriſh, and enſlave. *A. D.* 1100.

There were now two competitors for the crown: Robert, who was engaged in the Holy War; and Henry, the youngeſt brother, who remained at home. The right of ſucceſſion was evidently in favour of the firſt, but the latter was upon the ſpot. Nothing can be a more evident inſtance how little hereditary ſucceſſion was minded at that time, than that Henry's title prevailed, and that he was elected by the joint acclamations of the people. Whenever there is a diſputed throne, the people generally regain their liberty. Henry, knowing the weakneſs of his pretenſions to the crown, was reſolved to ſtrengthen his power, by gaining the affections of the people: he, therefore, once more confirmed the ancient Saxon laws, and indulged the clergy in all their former privileges.

Upon Robert's return from the Holy Land, where he refuſed to be crowned king of Jeruſalem, he found himſelf deprived, in his abſence,

of a kingdom which he conſidered as his birthright. His attempts, however, to recover it were without ſucceſs. This prince ſeemed only born to be the ſport of fortune: his bravery, his generoſity, and a thouſand other good qualities, of which he was poſſeſſed, ſerved to render him the dupe of every deceiver, and the inſtrument of oppoſing villainy. At one time we behold him proſecuting his pretenſions with ſpirit; at another, giving up the juſt claims with vicious generoſity. Thus, after a life ſpent in toil, fatigue, and ambition, he found himſelf, at laſt, utterly deprived, not only of his patrimonial dukedom, but of his fortune, his freedom, and friends. He ſaw Normandy fall to the conqueror. And, to add to his misfortunes, he at laſt languiſhed, for twenty-ſix years of his life, a priſoner in Cardiff caſtle, in Wales, where he died in captivity. To want prudence is, in ſome meaſure, to want virtue.

Henry, having acquired poſſeſſion of Normandy, might now be ſaid to be maſter of a theatre where many a ſucceeding tragedy was to be performed; and ſoon his neighbour of France began to ſhew his jealouſy of ſo powerful a rival. Thoſe wars now began which were to be ſo fatal to diſtant poſterity. The ravages of the French were at firſt neglected, and Henry remained a quiet ſpectator in England, as if unprovoked at their inſolence: but ſoon he ſhewed, that his unwillingneſs to engage was by no means the effect of fear. He paſſed into Normandy with a powerful army, and offered the enemy battle: the challenge was ſoon accepted, and a furious combat enſued. During the fight, a French cavalier, named Criſpin, perſonally attacked the king of England, and ſtruck him twice on the head, with ſuch force, that all his armour

ſtreamed

ſtreamed with an effuſion from the wound. The king, however, no way intimidated, continued the ſingle combat with reſolution, and, ſummoning all his ſtrength, diſcharged ſuch a blow at his adverſary, as threw him from his horſe, ſo that he became the priſoner of the king's own hand. This decided the victory in favour of the Engliſh, who purſued the French with great ſlaughter, which haſtened the peace that was concluded ſoon after.

Fortune now ſeemed to ſmile upon Henry, and promiſed a long ſucceſſion of felicity: he was in peaceable poſſeſſion of two powerful ſtates, and had a prince for undiſputed heir, now arrived at his ſixteenth year, a youth of great hopes: all his enemies were humbled, and many actually in his own power: Matilda, his daughter, was married to the emperor Henry IV. and he had the hearts of the greateſt number of his ſubjects, particularly the Engliſh. All his proſpects, however, were at once clouded by an unforeſeen misfortune; an accident which tinctured his remaining life with miſery. Henry, returning victorious from abroad, brought with him a numerous retinue of the chief nobility. In one of the veſſels of the fleet, his ſon, and ſeveral young noblemen, his companions, went together to render the paſſage more agreeable. The young prince, deſirous to be firſt aſhore, promiſed the ſeamen a reward, if they came in foremoſt. This emulation was fatal to them all; the pilot ran the ſhip upon a rock, and immediately ſhe was daſhed to pieces. The prince, however, was put into the boat, and would have eſcaped, had he not been called back by the cries of Matilda, his ſiſter. He was now out of danger himſelf, but could not leave her to periſh: he

prevailed upon the ſailors to row back to take her in; the approach of the boat giving others an opportunity to attempt ſaving their lives, ſeveral leaped in alſo, ſo that the boat was overloaded, and all, except one, went to the bottom. When Henry was informed of the cataſtrophe of his only ſon, he covered his face, and never laughed after.

The reſt of his life ſeems a mere blank; his reſtleſs ambition had nothing now to toil for. His daughter, Matilda, however, becoming a widow, he married her a ſecond time to Geoffry of Plantagenet, and, when brought to bed of a ſon, named Henry, he cauſed the nobility to take an oath of ſucceſſion in her favour. The great men of thoſe times were ready to ſwear whatever the monarch commanded, but obſerved it no longer than while they were obliged to obey. He did not long ſurvive this attempt to confirm this ſucceſſion: he died, as it is ſaid, of a ſurfeit, cauſed by eating lampreys, in the ſixty-eighth year of his age, having reigned thirty-ſix.

A. D. 1135.

It is ſtrange, that hiſtorians impute it as a fault to ſeveral Engliſh monarchs of thoſe times, that they came to the crown without hereditary claims to ſupport their title: this is one of the faults alledged againſt Henry; but it is none, if we conſider the uſual ſpirit of other ſucceſſions.

During the reign of Henry, the barons and the clergy were growing into power: each was a petty tyrant over thoſe who held under him. In order, therefore, to confirm privileges ſo lately acquired, they joined in electing a king, who might owe to them, and not to any previous claim, his prerogative and ſcepter. With ſuch intentions they pitched upon Stephen, nephew to the deceaſed king; and, as

for

for their oaths to Matilda, the biſhops gave them abſolution. They could not, indeed, have made a properer choice than him whom they elected; but their conduct proceeded only from a concern for themſelves, and not for the people. Stephen was ready enough to conſent to all their exorbitant demands: he acknowledged the crown as their gift, and not his juſt inheritance; and confirmed all the immunities, privileges, and claims of the clergy.

The kingdom now began to wear the face of an ariſtocracy, in which the barons and clergy might be ſaid to command. They built caſtles, fortified and garriſoned them with their own troops, from whence, when offended, they would bid their monarch defiance. Of all miſeries that ever affected kingdoms, an uncontrouled power among the great is certainly the moſt afflictive. The tyranny of a ſingle monarch only falls upon the narrow circle round him; the arbitrary will of a number of delegates falls moſt heavily upon the lower ranks of people who have no redreſs. In ſhort, the barons clamoured for their own privileges, the clergy for their own liberty, but the people were ſlaves.

Stephen was ſenſible of this, and, in order to diminiſh their power, poſſeſſed himſelf, by force, of ſome of their caſtles, which were incompatible with the ſafety of the kingdom.

Thus we may diſcern three different contending powers at this time; the king and his followers, the barons and their adherents, and the clergy, aſſiſted by the generality of the peeple: to theſe was ſoon added a fourth, Matilda, who claimed the crown in purſuance of Henry's command. This haughty woman, who had been wife to the emperor, and ſtill ſeemed to retain a conſciouſneſs of her

dignity, landed from Normandy, accompanied only by a few followers, and openly laid claim to the crown. Mean time, Stephen, being informed of her arrival, flew to beſiege Arundel, a caſtle belonging to the queen dowager, where Matilda had taken up her reſidence. This fortreſs did not ſeem to promiſe a long defence, and would have been ſoon taken, had it not been repreſented to him, that, as this was a caſtle belonging to the queen dowager, it would be an infringement of the reſpect due to her to attempt taking it by force. There was a ſpirit of generoſity prevalent in the times I treat of, which was unknown to their degenerate poſterity. Stephen permitted Matilda to come out, and conveyed her in ſafety to Briſtol, another fortreſs equally ſtrong with that from whence he permitted her to retire.

It is a deplorable conſideratiou, that our virtues, often, inſtead of being attended with happy conſequences, are found fatal to ſuch as adhere to them without deviation. Matilda, owing her freedom merely to the generoſity of the king, made no other uſe of it but to levy an army againſt him; and this army, at length, proved victorious. During the continuance of this civil war, the whole kingdom was divided; pillage and deſolation were the conſequence, whoever happened to be conqueror.

It was at length, however, determined by a deciſive victory obtained over the king. The troops he led were, in general, foreign mercenaries, and commanded by tumultuous barons, more accuſtomed to command than to conquer. His horſe gave way, and his infantry, being deſtitute of their aſſiſtance, ſoon followed their example, and deſerted their king. All the race of the

Norman

Norman conquerors were brave: Stephen unknowing how to fly, was left alone, and fought on foot in the midſt of the field of battle, aſſaulted by multitudes, and reſiſting all their efforts with aſtoniſhing valour. Had his horſe then rallied, he might have come off victorious. He was now hemmed in on every ſide, but with his battle-ax, made way for ſome time: that breaking, he then drew out his ſword, and dealt his blows round the circle in which he was incloſed. At length, after performing more than could naturally be expected from a ſingle arm, his ſword flying in pieces, he was obliged to ſurrender himſelf a priſoner. In this manner, he was conducted by the conqueror from the field, and ignominiouſly laid in irons.

Matilda was now proclaimed queen, and, for ſome time, her power was acknowledged by the generality of the nation. But, as ſhe diſdained to accept the ſhadow of royalty, which was all the barons and clergy intended to grant, ſhe diſguſted them by her pride, and ſoon made thoſe repent who had raiſed her from their levity. The biſhop of Wincheſter ſeems, at this time, to have been poſſeſſed of unbounded power. He had been chiefly inſtrumental in raiſing her to the throne; he now, therefore, levied an army, to convince her, that it was no leſs in his power to deprive her of a kingdom than to put her in poſſeſſion of it. He was ſucceſsful in his deſigns: Matilda was obliged to quit England once more, and Stephen was taken from chains, and once more placed upon the throne.

Again put in poſſeſſion of this uneaſy ſeat, he ſeemed to be exalted to give new inſtances of his refuſing the exorbitant demands of the barons and the clergy. He endeavoured to get the crown to

devolve upon his ſon; but this was not complied with by the biſhops. It is ſaid though it has ſcarcely the appearance of truth, that he confined them in one houſe, and there threatened to detain them, till they complied with his will. This was an extraordinary method of obtaining their conſent, and ſeems inconſiſtent with his uſual wiſdom: his precautions, accordingly, proved unſucceſsful, and the archbiſhop found means to eſcape his guards, and fly into Normandy, in order to bring over a new king, and to raiſe a new inſurrection.

In conſequence of this biſhop's intrigues, Henry, ſon to the empreſs Matilda, and who had been long acknowledged for duke of Normandy, ſoon landed with a formidable army. The barons ever reſtleſs and regardleſs of their obligations, were again divided upon this occaſion, and a terrible civil war threatened the kingdom afreſh, when, happily for the people, a truce was propoſed between the oppoſite powers: this paved the way to a more laſting peace. It was agreed that Stephen ſhould enjoy the crown of England during his life, and that Henry ſhould be acknowledged as his ſucceſſor. In this manner a civil war was terminated, which had, for ſome years, laid England in blood. The nation once more began to reſpire from their calamities, and Stephen's death ſoon put his rival in poſſeſſion of a crown, which, to the former, had afforded only diſappointment, fatigue, and danger.

LETTER XII.

WE have hitherto ſeen the barons and clergy becoming powerful in proportion to the weakneſs of the monarch's title to the crown, and enriching themſelves with the ſpoils of depreſſed majeſty. Henry Plantagenet had now every right, both from the hereditary ſucceſſion and univerſal aſſent, that could fix a monarch on his throne: conſcious, therefore, of his ſtrength, he began to reſume thoſe privileges which had been extorted from his predeceſſor's weakneſs. *A. D.* 1160.

He firſt commenced by demoliſhing thoſe caſtles which the barons and clergy had built, and which only ſerved as ſanctuaries to guilt, treaſon, and debauchery: he diſmiſſed the foreign troops which had been mercenaries to his predeceſſor, and, perceiving the poverty of the crown, reſumed all thoſe lands which properly belonged to it: he enacted ſome laws, by which the people, in ſome meaſure, became independent of their barons, by whom they were claimed as appurtenances to their eſtates and manors.

He gave charters to ſeveral towns, by which the citizens claimed their freedom and privileges, independent of any ſuperior but himſelf. Theſe charters may properly be called the ground-work of Engliſh liberty. The ſtrugglers heretofore were, whether a monarchy, or an ariſtocracy, ſhould prevail; whether the king, or the nobility, only: but, by this grant, the loweſt order of people began to have a juſt value for themſelves, and to claim the prerogatives of humanity. Thus was the

feudal government firſt impaired; liberty began to be diffuſed more equally upon every rank of people, and the kings became capable of levying armies independent of their vaſſals.

But, though he, in ſome meaſure, diminiſhed the power of the barons, by enlarging that of the people, yet ſtill there was a third power, namely, the clergy, which daily grew ſtronger, and, united by one bond, purſuing the ſame deſign, were making large ſtrides to independence. He undertook to humble them alſo. He perceived the clergy were reſolved, not only to be exempt from the uſual taxes of the ſtate, but even its puniſhments. They had extorted an immunity from all but eccleſiaſtical cenſures in the preceding reign, and continued to maintain that grant in the preſent. It may eaſily be ſuppoſed, that a law, which thus ſcreened their guilt, ſerved but to encreaſe it: accordingly, more than an hundred murders, upon proof, were committed by the clergy, of which not one was puniſhed, even with degradation. What is ſtill more aſtoniſhing, the biſhops gloried in their horrid indulgence. Among the number of murderers who were pardoned was a clergyman of the dioceſe of Sarum. The complaint was brought before the archbiſhop's court, and the circumſtances of his guilt appeared moſt atrocious. However, the only puniſhment decreed was, that the murderer ſhould be deprived of his benefice, and confined to a monaſtery. The king, ſtruck with horror at ſuch injuſtice, reproached the archbiſhop, who, on the other hand, aſſerted, that an eccleſiaſtic could not be puniſhed with death, and that the king had no right to intermeddle in the affairs of the church. This archbiſhop was the noted Thomas a Becket, who had been advanced,

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by the king, to this high ſtation from the meaneſt obſcurity. He was a man of ſtrong paſſions, great pride, and great zeal, which had been, in the early part of life, ſmothered in deep diſſimulation and apparent humility. He was, at this time, poſſeſſed at once of the chancellorſhip, of the archbiſhopric of Canterbury, and was legate to the holy ſee. Theſe were great truſts; but, what rendered him ſtill more powerful, he either thought himſelf a ſaint, or affected to be thought ſo: he wore ſackcloth next his ſkin, and his equipage and diet were mean and ſimple. So much power, pride, and ſeeming humility, united, were formidable; and ſuch Henry found them.

The king propoſed, in council of the nobles, that the biſhops ſhould not be permitted to go to Rome; that no ſubject ſhould appeal to the holy ſee; that no officer of the crown ſhould be excommunicated, or ſuſpended, without the Sovereign's permiſſion; and, laſtly, (which was the great article he aimed at,) that ths clergy ſhould be ſubject to the temporal judges, as well as the reſt of his ſubjects. Such juſt propoſitions were agreed to by all preſent; even Becket heſitated not to ſign his name. They were referred next to the pope for his approbation: the pope diſapproved of them all. Upon this, therefore, Becket declared his repentance, for having complied with the king in ſigning the conſtitutions of Clarendon, as they were called; and, in order to carry on the farce, ſuſpended himſelf, as unworthy to perform his functions, till the pope ſhould pleaſe to abſolve him.

This pardon he quickly obtained, and now he ſet no bounds to his obſtinacy and ambition. Some hiſtorians deſcribe Becket as a ſaint, and ſome as a deſigning hypocrite; neither are, probably, juſt

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in their opinions. He purſued, with inflexibility, what was in fact wrong, but what education, and the manners of the times, had taught him to believe was right: his errors were rather of judgment than of will.

The king was reſolved to humble a man who had, by his authority, been lifted into power, and accuſed him of embezzling the public money, while chancellor. While the judges were conſulting, Becket inſolently entered the council, with a croſier in his hand, to intimidate his judges; but, notwithſtanding his boldneſs, he was condemned as a traitor, although he found means of avoiding puniſhment by eſcaping into Flanders.

The popes had long been growing formidable to the kings of England. Alexander III. immediately eſpouſed Becket's quarrel, and brought the king to conſent to a conference, which came to nothing; another ſucceeded, but with as little ſucceſs; a third was propoſed and accepted. The king, wearied out with the repeated threats of the pope, and the excommunications of his clergy, conſented to almoſt every thing the haughty prelate demanded. But when all the articles were ſettled, and Becket was to give the king the kiſs of peace, he took it into his head to ſay, that it was for God's honour: the king inſiſted that this expreſſion ſhould be retracted; Becket inſiſted upon uſing it: this renewed the debate, and the conference ended once more without effect.

At length, however, after an interval of ſome years, they were reconciled, and the archbiſhop made his entry into London, amidſt the acclamations of the populace. His pride was now increaſed by ſucceſs, and he went from town to town in a ſort of triumphal cavalcade. But he was

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ſcarcely reinſtated in his power, when he began to exert it to its utmoſt extent: he ſolemnly excommunicated two lords who had oppoſed him, and publiſhed the pope's letters for the ſuſpenſion of ſeveral biſhops who had ſhewn themſelves his enemies. The king, who was in Normandy, ſoon received information of this prelate's pride and popularity, and ſoon after the ſuſpended biſhops came over to lay their complaints before him: throwing themſelves at his feet, they implored his protection, and enveighed againſt their oppreſſor. Henry was now quite exaſperated by their complaints; and, continually uneaſy from the repeated inſtances of Becket's inſolence, was heard to ſay, *Is there none to revenge their monarch's cauſe upon this audacious prieſt?* Theſe words ſeemed to arm the moſt reſolute of his attendants; and four knights, whoſe names were Hugh Norvil, William Tracy, Hugh Brito, and Richard Fitzurſe, haſtened to Canterbury, and, entering the cathedral where Becket was officiating, with a few attendants, they beat out his brains, with clubs, at the foot of the altar.

His death confirmed thoſe privileges to the clergy which his oppoſition could not do. His reſolution during life, and his reſignation, when dying, gained the hearts of the people. He was looked upon as a martyr, and the clergy took care to confirm his ſanctity by miracles. When the people are reſolved to ſee miracles, they are ſeldom diſappointed: it was not ſufficient that his ſhrine had a power of reſtoring dead men to life; it reſtored alſo cows, dogs, and horſes. It was reported, and believed, that he roſe from his coffin before he was buried, to light the tapers deſigned for his funeral; and, when the funeral ceremony

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was over, that he ſtretched forth his hand to bleſs the people. Thus Becket became a ſaint, and Henry was ſuſpected of being the author of his aſſaſſination.

In order to divert the attention of the public from ſuſpicions of this nature, Henry undertook the conqueſt of Ireland; a project formed ſome years before, but deferred on account of his long protracted quarrel. The more readily to gain the pope's approbation of his undertaking, for nothing could then be achieved without the ſanction of Rome,) he cleared himſelf, by oath, of being any way privy to the aſſaſſination, and made a ſolemn vow to go barefoot to Becket's tomb, there to receive the diſcipline of the church.

Thus furniſhed with Pope Adrian's bull, which granted him a kingdom which was not his to give, he ſubdued Ireland with a rapidity equal to his moſt ſanguine hopes: but it was no hard matter to conquer a country which was at that time barbarous, and divided under different chiefs, and each purſuing different views and intereſts.

But the happineſs this monarch received from this acceſſion of power, was ſoon allayed by a conſpiracy in his own family. Among the few vices of this monarch, unlimited gallantry was one. His queen was diſagreeable, and he was faithleſs: but, though an admirer of all the ſex, he ſingled out, with particular affection, Roſamond Clifford, a lady of matchleſs beauty. Hiſtorians and poets talk of the fair Roſamond in the warmeſt ſtrains of rapture: if what they ſay be true, never did England produce ſo much beauty united with ſo much grace before. He kept her concealed in a labyrinth at Woodſtock Park, and, in her company, paſſed his hours of vacancy and pleaſure. But

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the queen at length came to a knowledge of this amour, and, purſuing her happy rival to her retreat, guided, ſay ſome, by a clue of ſilk, ſhe obliged her to take poiſon.

As this was an offence which the queen could not be forgiven, ſhe was reſolved not to forgive. Her ſons were ſoon brought to ſhare her reſentments, and a conſpiracy was formed, abetted by all the malecontents of the kingdom. To this unnatural combination, Henry oppoſed his uſual prudence and reſolution: he ſeemed on every ſide aſſaulted, but every-where came off victorious. Aſcribing, however, the oppoſition of his own children to the indignation of offended heaven, he was reſolved, by an exemplary penance, to conciliate its favour.

Now was the time in which the clergy were to come off victorious; this was the ſeaſon in which they were to reap the labours of their martyred defender; and by one weak action the king was now to cancel that firmneſs, which a great part of his life had been employed in bringing to ripeneſs. Being come within ſight of Canterbury, he walked barefoot to Becket's tomb, in extreme pain; there he was ſcourged by the monks, and ſpent the whole night upon the pavement. The monks were thus reinſtated again in all their claims, and the people involved in greater ſuperſtition than before.

This penance, however, no way ſerved to reconcile him to his family; he even curſed their ingratitude, and, wearied with domeſtic contention, reſolved, at laſt, to undertake a cruſade. His ſon Richard, however, ſtill purſuing the dictates of ambition rather than of nature, deprived him of all power to put this deſign into execution. Paſſion and diſappointment, therefore, began to

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make visible depredations on his constitution, and mark him for the grave: he fell sick at Chinon, in Normandy, and, finding his end approach, he caused himself to be carried in the church, before the altar, where he expired with scarce a single attendant to deplore his fall.

LETTER XIII.

WHEN I compare the English, at this period, with the neighbouring nations, I can't avoid remarking in them a peculiar degree of courage, generosity, and politeness. They had, during the Saxon kings, sunk into bigotry and effeminacy; but a mixture of the Norman fierceness improved their characters, and rendered them at once valiant and merciful.

You have seen Henry, as well as all his Norman predecessors, improve those good qualities in his subjects, not less by influence than example. You have seen him attempting to increase the freedom of the people by corporation charters, and to diminish the power of the barons by weakening the feudal government, by which the peasants and husbandmen were slaves. In these designs he succeeded; but he failed in his endeavours of lessening the power of the clergy. The kingdom, at his decease, therefore, assumed a different appearance from what it wore before his accession. The people now began to have some, though but a small share of power; the barons had still vast authority, though less than formerly; while the clergy might be considered as a body entirely distinct from the rest of the community, governed by their

their own laws, and profeſſing ſubjection only to the pope.

In this ſituation were affairs, when Richard, the ſon of Henry, came by ſucceſſion to the government, in which his reign made no material alteration. The prieſts being the moſt powerful body of men, it is not ſurpriſing to find the king ſeconding their ſchemes, which perhaps he found it impoſſible to oppoſe. Religion was then the pretext for every ſiniſter action, obedience to the church the only rule of merit; and to oppoſe the enemies of Chriſtianity, was preached up as an antidote for every former tranſgreſſion. The kingdom of Paleſtine had been, for ſome time, the theatre of war, and had drained Europe of its moſt choſen troops, which fell like leaves in autumn, either by peſtilence, famine, or the ſword. In this quarrel the clergy found means to embark the king, by awakening his ambition, and ſtrengthening his natural ſuperſtition. A romantic deſire for ſtrange adventures, and an immoderate zeal for the external parts of Chriſtianity, were the ruling paſſions of the times, and they eaſily became the ruling paſſions of Richard. *A. D.* 1189.

Impreſſed with a deſire of reſcuing the Holy Land from the infidels, he left England, and with a numerous army paſſed through France, took Cyprus from a Chriſtian prince, landed in Paleſtine, overcame Saladine with a ſlaughter of forty thouſand Saracens, took ſeveral cities from the infidels, and gained much reputation for conduct and perſonal bravery; yet, after all, he acquired no real advantages for himſelf, or the cauſe in which he was engaged. Having concluded a true for three years with Saladine, he ſet ſail for his return; but,

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his ſhips being diſperſed by a tempeſt, he was obliged to land upon the coaſts of Italy, where, purſuing his way homeward by land, he was arreſted by the duke of Auſtria, and put into the power of the emperor, who cruelly and ungenerouſly detained him a priſoner, upon the ſlighteſt and moſt trivial pretences.

In the mean time England had been left under the government of two prelates, the biſhop of Durham, and Longchamp, biſhop of Ely. The clergy, ſole poſſeſſors and rulers of the kingdom, might have given what laws they thought proper; but there is a fatality in the affairs of men, that, when they are deſtitute of foreign enemies, they generally make foes of each other. The governors, now without rivals in the temporal intereſt, diſagreed among themſelves, and thus weakened the power of the clergy. John, brother to Richard, who long had aſpired to the crown, fomented this jealouſy among the clergy, and, putting himſelf at the head of the temporal lords, increaſed their authority by the addition of his own. He heard of the impriſonment of his brother with ſecret ſatisfaction, and uſed all his intereſt to continue his captivity.

The Engliſh, notwithſtanding theſe ungenerous efforts, continued faithful to their king: his bravery and generoſity had ſecured the hearts of the people, and the cauſe he fought for engaged the affection of the clergy. The monaſteries, therefore, ſtrained their finances to raiſe a ſum to procure his releaſe, and the churches gave up their treaſures upon promiſe of having them reſtored upon his return. By theſe efforts Richard at length procured his liberty: the emperor, either aſhamed

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of his own baſeneſs, or fearing the reſentment of the German princes, agreed upon his releaſe for a large ranſom, and England once more ſaw her brave monarch return, crowned with conqueſt, after numberleſs victories, diſtreſſes, and ſurmounted dangers.

The generoſity of this prince was equal to his valour: he knew that his brother John had, in his abſence, attempted to ſupplant him in the throne; he had an exact information of all his intrigues with the French, who had long endeavoured to blaſt his laurels and interrupt his conqueſts; yet, upon John's ſubmiſſion, he generouſly forgave him all: *I wiſh*, cried he, taking his brother by the hand, *I wiſh I could as eaſily forget your offences, as you will my pardon.* This condeſcenſion was not loſt upon a man whoſe heart, though naturally bad, was not dead to all the ſentiments of humanity. From this time John ſerved him with fidelity, and did him noble ſervices in his battles with the French, which followed ſoon after.

While Richard was engaged upon the continent in a French war, an inſurrection was ſuppreſſed at London, which, though but ſlightly mentioned by hiſtorians, ſhould be particularly marked by ſuch as would trace the conſtitution. William Fitzoſborn, commonly called Longbeard, is repreſented at once as a man brave and enterpriſing. He had long been an advocate for the poor and meaneſt of the people, and had gained the hearts of the populace, who held him in extreme veneration. Upon inflicting a new tax, the burthen of which was to fall entirely on the poor, he raiſed an inſurrection of the people, which the archbiſhop was, at firſt, unable to appeaſe. The

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principal citizens being called, upon this occaſion, to arms, Longbeard was at length hard preſſed, and obliged to take refuge in one of the churches: but no ſanctuary could ſcreen this ſelf-delegated champion; he was ſeiſed, convicted, and, with nine of his accomplices, hanged in chains. This was the firſt inſtance of the people's ſtruggling for privileges as a body diſtinct from the barons and clergy. Longbeard may be conſidered as the firſt victim to that untameable ſpirit, which ever ſince has actuated this people in ſupport of their privileges, and prompted them to the rights of humanity.

Upon a review of the reſt of his reign, we find the monarch almoſt always in the field, or intent upon ſchemes to ſupply his warlike expeditions. If, indeed, it were juſt to aſcribe his misfortunes to his incenſed father's malediction, we might be apt to ſuſpect it, in ſome meaſure, as the cauſe. However, after a reign of ten years, thus paſſed in turbulence and fruitleſs victory, he died of a wound received from an arrow at the ſiege of Chaluz. While he was yet alive, the ſoldier, by whoſe hand he died, was brought before him: the king ſternly demanded the reaſon why he fought his life? *My father and my brothers*, replied the undaunted ſoldier, *died by your hand*; *heaven has given me the opportunity of a juſt and glorious revenge.* The dying monarch, no way exaſperated at this reply, obſerved, that the centinel had done his duty, ordered him a preſent, and forgave him. But the Flemiſh general, who commanded under Richard, was unacquainted with ſuch generoſity: inſtead of complying with the king, he ſeiſed the miſerable wretch, and, after Richard's death, commanded him, in his preſence, to be flead alive.

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The principal actions of this prince were generous and brave. I know not what pleasure Rapin, that so frequently injudicious historian, can take in lessening the virtues of the race of Norman monarchs. Among other faults ascribed to Richard, he accuses him of pride; yet it appears he bore the admonition of his inferiors with gentleness and good humour. The easiness of his disposition, as well as the delicacy of his wit, are apparent from the quickness of his replies. It is said, that, being one day admonished, by an obscure monk, to part with his three daughters, by which he meant his pride, his lust, and his avarice; he wittily made answer, that he desired nothing more, and had already pitched upon proper husbands for their disposal: he resolved to give his pride to the Templars, his avarice to the Monks, and, as for his lust, the Clergy should share that among them. Such insolent advice, from a churchman, at this day, would be attended with a very different reply.

LETTER XIV.

THE wars that were now kindled up between England and France, continued *A. D.* 1199. to depopulate both countries, without making, in the end, any material alteration. John, the brother and successor of Richard, pursued them with unabating vigour. We may regard these, and such like commotions, among Christian princes, as pestilences, which lay whole provinces waste, without making any change in their limits, their manners, or government.

John

John, who was ſurnamed Lackland, was, in fact, poſſeſſed of the moſt extenſive dominion of any prince in Europe. Beſides the lands left him by ſucceſſion, he had wreſted Bretagne from Arthur, his nephew, whoſe right it was. However, John, by thus pretending to what was not juſtly his, in the end loſt even what he had.

Having made himſelf maſter of Bretagne, the unfortunate Arthur alſo fell into his power. He cauſed him to be confined in a tower, and what became of him was never after explained to the public ſatisfaction. John was ſuſpected, and not without reaſon, of the death of his nephew. He made ſome efforts to wipe off the odious ſtain, yet without effect. Happily for the inſtruction of future princes, this crime only opened a way to his future ruin; and having begun his reign by being the enemy of mankind in proſperity, the whole world, in the end, ſeemed to turn their back upon him in his diſtreſs. The power of the nobility of France was now exerted, with juſtice, againſt him: thoſe aſſemblies of noblemen, each of which was, at that time, the petty lawleſs tyrant of his dependents, in this inſtance, at leaſt, undertook to puniſh the guilty. Conſtance, the unfortunate mother of the murdered prince, flew for protection to the peers, and implored redreſs. The king of England was ſummoned to appear; he refuſed, and the peers of France confiſcated all the lands and poſſeſſions which were held under that crown. This confiſcation was ſoon attended with vigorous efforts to it put into execution. John, at once both weak and cowardly, a tyrant when unoppoſed, but timorous in danger, ſuffered himſelf tamely to be ſtripped of them all. He ſucceſſively loſt Normandy,

mandy, Touraine, and Poictou; and then fled back to England, to make himself hated and despised.

Hitherto, however, he was only contemptible to his neighbour princes; he still had some expectations from the esteem and affection of his natural subjects: but he soon shewed, that all his skill was only to make himself enemies, that he wanted abilities to reconcile. The clergy had, for some time, acted as a separate body, and had their elections of each other generally confirmed by the pope. The election of archbishops had, for some time, been a continual subject of dispute between the suffragan bishops and the Augustine monks, and both had precedents to confirm their pretensions. Things being in this situation, the archbishop of Canterbury happened to die, and the Augustine monks, in a private manner, made choice of Reginald, their sub-prior. The bishops exclaimed at this as invading their privileges, and here was likely to begin a theological contest. A politic prince would have managed the quarrel in such a manner, as to let the body of the clergy thus grow weaker by division: but John was not a politic prince; he immediately sided with the suffragan bishops, and the bishop of Norwich was unanimously chosen. To decide the differences, an appeal was made to the pope. Innocent III. who then filled the chair, possessed an unbounded share of power, and his talents were equal to the veneration he was held in: he vacated both claims, and enjoined the monks to chuse Stephen Langton, an Englishman, then at the court of Rome. John knew how to oppose, though not to negotiate: he received the pope's decree with a degree of ungoverned fury, and returned the pope a letter filled

with abuſe. Innocent, in return, put the whole kingdom of England under an interdict, and forbade the king's ſubjects longer to obey him. Theſe eccleſiaſtical thunders were, at that time, truly formidable; and the more ſo, as the execution of them was committed to Philip Auguſtus, king of France, an ambitious and a politic prince. To him the pope gave the kingdom of England, as a perpetual inheritance, aſſuring him of a remiſſion of all his ſins, if he happened to ſucceed in conquering it. He granted all who embarked in this cauſe alſo the ſame indulgencies as were uſually given to ſuch as went upon a cruſade. Philip immediately embraced the offer: not content with depriving John of his continental dominions, he devoured, in imagination, the kingdom of England alſo. By his preparations it was evident how deſirous he was to ſucceed in this undertaking: the ſhips, of which his fleet was to conſiſt, came together to the mouth of the Seine, whilſt the princes, his vaſſals, collected their forces to the ſhore from all parts of the country. His army was numerous, and the diſcontents of the Engliſh were equivalent to thouſands more. Philip was ready, therefore, to ſet ſail, and John, on his part, made an expiring effort to receive him. All hated as he was, the natural enmity between the French and the Engliſh, the name of a king, and ſome remaining ſhare of power, put him at the head of an army of ſixty thouſand men, with which he advanced to Dover.

Europe regarded ſuch important preparations with impatience, and the deciſive blow was ſoon expected. The pope was too refined a politician for both, and took upon himſelf what he pretended to have deſigned for Philip. This ſingular negotiation was executed by Pandulph, at the pope's

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legate to France and England. He paſſed through France, where he beheld Philip's great armament, and highly commended his zeal and diligence; from thence he went over to Dover, under pretence of negotiating with the barons in favour of the French king, and had a conference with John upon his arrival. He there repreſented the number of the enemy, the hatred of many of his own ſubjects; he intimated, that there was but one way to ſecure himſelf from impending danger, which was, to put himſelf under the pope's protection, who, as a kind and merciful father, was ſtill willing to receive him to his boſom.

John was too much intimidated by the apparent danger not to embrace every means of offered ſafety. He conſented to the legate's remonſtrances, and took an oath to perform what the pope ſhould impoſe. Having thus ſworn to perform he knew not what, the artful Italian ſo well managed the barons, and intimidated the king, that he took the following extraordinary oath, before all the people, kneeling upon his knees, and putting his hands between thoſe of the legate:

" I, John, by the grace of God, King of Eng-
" land and Lord of Ireland, in order to expiate
" my ſins, from my own free will, and the ad-
" vice of my barons, give to the church of Rome,
" to pope Innocent, and his ſucceſſors, the king-
" dom of England, and all other prerogatives of
" my crown: I will hereafter hold them as the
" pope's vaſſal. I will be faithful to God, to
" the church of Rome, and to the pope my maſ-
" ter, and his ſucceſſors legitimately elected. I
" promiſe to pay him a tribute of a thouſand
" marks yearly, to wit, ſeven hundred for the

"kingdom of England, and three hundred for "Ireland."

By this mean conceſſion John ſecured his crown from a foreign invaſion, but became effectually contemptible in the eyes of his people: ſtill, however, he was not hated by his ſubjects; their hatred only was wanting to ſink him into complete wretchedneſs. After being expoſed to ſo many diſgraceful humiliations, he now thought, at the expence of his honour, to ſpend the remaining years of his life in tranquillity; but, in proportion as he loſt the eſteem of the Engliſh, he loſt their affections alſo. The former monarchs ſupported their power by a nice oppoſition of the clergy and the barons: when they intended to humble the nobility, they granted new privileges to the church; when they deſired to leſſen the power of the clergy, they gave greater force to the temporal intereſts. John was ignorant of the manner of conducting this oppoſition: he had offended the clergy, and increaſed their power, without making them his friends; he had it only left now to offend his barons, to render himſelf obnoxious to every order of people. His former puſillanimity ſoon gave this powerful body hopes of expecting a renewal of thoſe powers of which they had been deprived in the preceding reign: they demanded, therefore, the re-eſtabliſhment of their ancient privileges, and John believed himſelf authoriſed to refuſe them. This created new diſſenſions: the king, with a ſtrange perverſeneſs, in turn, demanded their aſſiſtance for the recovery of his loſt dominions on the continent, and they refuſed to follow him. Their refuſal was ſoon followed by more open acts of hoſtility: they formed a confederacy, and, at an appointed meeting,

ing, forced the king to grant all their demands, and ſign that charter by which the Engliſh are ſaid to hold their liberties at this day.

The barons and the clergy by this ſeemed the only governors of the kingdom: the commonalty had no ſhare in the legiſlature; they were paſſed away, with the lands on which they were born, by their haughty poſſeſſors; they were reckoned only as the ſheep, oxen, and other moveable poſſeſſions, which were upon the eſtate: the guardian of an heir was to preſerve the lands entire, and, to uſe the words of the Magna Charta, *ſine deſtructione et vaſto hominum vel rerum*, without deſtruction or waſte of the men or the things upon it. The king, the barons, or the clergy, were all, in reality, enemies to public liberty: their parties were ſo many factions in the nation, ſubverſive of the rights of mankind. How they, in turn, helped to eſtabliſh liberty, you ſhall ſee in my future correſpondence.

This charter was, in fact, giving the barons a definitive judgment upon whatſoever they thought proper to repreſent as a grievance: they were to prefer their complaints to the king, and he was, in forty days, to give them ſatisfaction, or they were legally impowered to command it. This was an infringement of the prerogative, which he complied with through fear, and, as ſoon as he was at liberty, he retracted all he had agreed to: he loudly complained of the force with which it had been exacted, and he demanded juſtice from the pope his new maſter.

The pope, who had lately excommunicated the king, now excommunicated the barons: the barons, exaſperated, did exactly what the pope had formerly done upon a like occaſion; they offered

the crown of England to France. Philip, ever ready to profit by theſe commotions, accepted their offer with joy; but, fearing the pope's diſpleaſure, if he aſſumed a title to what was now conſidered as a patrimony of the holy ſee, he prevailed upon the barons to elect his ſon Lewis. To this league of the barons with France, the city of London lent its aſſiſtance. We ſhould be careful to obſerve every beginning of power among the commons of England, and this ſeems to be one of the moſt obvious inſtances. This noble city was the firſt that freed itſelf from feudal government, and ventured to follow leaders of its own appointment: in ſhort it may, at this period, be looked upon as a little republic, fighting between the powers of ariſtocracy, repreſented in the barons, and of deſpotiſm, aſſumed by the king.

In the mean time, the army of Lewis, which was called over to the aſſiſtance of the barons, committed ſtrange diſorders; while, on the other hand, the army of John, which, like the former, was moſtly compoſed of foreigners, was ſtill more inſolent and audacious. Never was England in a more deplorable condition: ſhe had two armies of hungry foreigners in her bowels, ravaging the country in a mercileſs manner, and threatening ruin, which ſoever proved victorious. John was, at length, depoſed by his barons, and Lewis ſolemnly crowned at London. The new monarch then firſt thought of having the pope's ſanction to his claim. The pope debated in council the juſtice of a cauſe which ſcarcely deſerved a moment's heſitation; while John led his haraſſed army from city to city, diſtruſting even his moſt faithful adherents. Pity then procured friends which proſperity could not procure; and now the barons were ſtruck with

ſome remorſe to ſee their native country, by their procurement, thus laid deſolate, and their king a wanderer: but what added to their afflictions was, that their ſervices were hitherto ſlightly repaid by the new-crowned monarch, and from a knowledge of his diſpoſition, they could hope for no increaſe of future favours. It was even reported among them, that his intentions were to baniſh them for their diſloyalty to their former ſovereign, though exerted in his own favour. Whatever their motives might be, forty barons addreſſed letters of ſubmiſſive ſuit to king John; the pope alſo held the juſtice of his claim in ſuſpenſe; a gleam of diſtant proſperity ſeemed to brighten his affairs: but, while the conjecture ſeemed big with new events, the death of both the pope and of John decided the conteſt. This monarch died in the fifty-firſt year of his age, after a reign of more than ſeventeen years, ſpent in wars without ſucceſs, and exertions of power without increaſe of authority.

LETTER XV.

HAD Lewis, who was crowned king, diſſembled till poſſeſſed of uncontrouled power, he might have retained the crown; but the barons wanted a monarch ſubſervient to their power, and Lewis refuſed a kingdom upon ſuch conditions.

They now, therefore, turned from the French intruder to the young monarch, from whom they expected greater condeſcenſion.

Henry III. appointed ſucceſſor to the crown by John his father, was but ten years of age, when made king, and the earl of *A. D.* 1216.

Pembroke was, by mutual conſent, conſtituted his guardian. The inconſtancy of the Engliſh was now more than ever apparent: Lewis was, in ſome meaſure, forſaken by his new ſubjects, and, after a defeat, obliged to relinquiſh all pretenſions to the kingdom. What the barons, however, had hoped from the king's tender age, did not anſwer their expectations. The earl of Pembroke, who governed his nonage, made a powerful intereſt with the clergy, and, by their means, ſerved to balance the ſtate.

While Henry acted under the direction of others, the power of the barons ſeemed to have been kept under: he had the clergy for him, and conſequently the people, and theſe two were equivalent to all the nobility. But, as ſoon as Henry came to take the reigns into his own hands, numberleſs inſurrections and calamities were the reſult of his obſtinacy, folly, and vice. Infinite were the ſtruggles for power between the barons and the king. Henry's luxury and profuſeneſs continually rendered him a petitioner to the aſſemblies of barons for money, (for now the kings began to aſk money inſtead of men,) and they as conſtantly demanded a confirmation of thoſe privileges which had been granted them under the reign of his predeceſſor.

In order to render himſelf independent of them, he found a thouſand ridiculous pretences for raiſing money without their aſſiſtance. He would invite himſelf to the houſes of his ſubjects, and always expected a preſent at the door; he extorted from the Jews, wherever he found them, without any remorſe; he even ſcrupled not to defraud minors of their lawful inheritances, to which he had

had been left protector: while the people had the mortification to see those sums lavished upon undeserving favourites, foreigners without merit, strumpets, flatterers, and all the vermin of a vicious court.

But all his exactions were not sufficient to supply his prodigality; he still wanted money, he still was obliged to have recourse to his barons, and yet he still desired to be absolute: the barons, on the contrary, who had long aimed at independence, and who detested his cowardice and luxury, refused his request. Though no monarch was more timid in danger, none was more presumptuous in prosperity: he threatened them, for refusing, with his severe displeasure, and strengthened himself by the assistance of the pope, in order to plunder the kingdom.

Whilst the English were complaining of the avarice of their king, and his profusion to foreign favourites, the pope's legate made his triumphal entry to rob them of what the king had not laid hands on. The interests of the clergy and of the pope were formerly one, but they now began to flow in divided channels. The riches, which some years before settled in their monasteries at home, were drained off to enrich a distant kingdom, already too luxurious. The clergy, therefore, justly dreaded the arrival of an extraordinary legate, whose only aims were directed by avarice and extortion. They expostulated, but in vain, to the king, against this unnecessary ambassador from the head of the church: the king hoped to reap some private advantage from his arrival, and he was but little concerned for public grievances. In every demand the king made for himself, the

legate would take care to make one for the pope alſo: he even propoſed that the monks ſhould ſign their names to notes, where a blank was left for the ſum ſpecified. The exactions, thus daily committed upon the churches, compelled the biſhops to carry their complaints to the pope himſelf; but the king ſtill vindicated the legate's conduct. At length, the prelates, quite tired with the repeated demands of the legate, who daily had ſome new pretext for getting money, reſolved to meet and conſider of ſome remedy to prevent his rapacity. They accordingly aſſembled, but had ſcarce begun to complain to each other of the miſeries they ſuffered, when the legate entered the aſſembly, with a demand for more money: this they conſidered as an accumulation of impudence and extortion, and they gave him a blunt denial. The legate, being diſappointed, for this time left the aſſembly, and went to pillage the Scotch clergy with better proſpects of ſucceſs.

An accident happened about this time, which ſerves as a ſtrong inſtance of the ſubmiſſion the people yielded to the power of Rome. Some buſineſs induced the legate to take Oxford in his way: he was received with all the grandeur and magnificence, which, from his character, he had a right to expect. As the luxury in which theſe Italian dignitaries lived, was great, ſeveral ſcholars of the univerſity, while the legate's dinner was preparing, entered his kitchen, incited by motives of curioſity or hunger. While they here and there admired the opulence and luxury of all they ſaw, a poor Iriſh ſcholar ventured to beg relief from the cook: the cook, inſtead of giving an alms, threw a ladle full of boiling water in his face;

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an action which so provoked a Welsh studient who was present, that, having a bow in his hand, he shot the cook dead with an arrow. The legate, hearing the tumult, retired in a fright to the tower of the church, where he remained till night-fall. As soon as he thought he might retire with safety, he hastened to the king, and complained of this outrage: the king, with his usual meanness, flew into a violent passion, and offered to give immediate satisfaction, by putting the offenders to death. The legate, at first, seemed to insist upon vengeance, but, at length, was appeased by proper submission from the university: all the scholars of that school which had offended him, were ordered to be stripped of their gowns, and to walk barefoot, with haltars about their necks, to the legate's house, and humbly crave pardon and absolution. It would be no easy matter to bring the studients of Oxford to such an humiliation at present.

In this manner this brutal and capricious tyrant went on, leagued with the pope against his own dominions. He had now neither barons nor clergy in his interest, and owed all his support to the authority of the papal and royal names. The pope continued to make reiterated demands upon the clergy, and the king would beg from his subjects at their own houses, as if he had been asking charity. At one time he would get money, by pretending to take the crusade; at another he would prevail, by going to re-conquer his dominions in France: again, he would extort aid, under pretext of portioning a relation; and he would frequently assure his parliament of barons, that, though he had hitherto behaved unworthily, yet, upon being supplied once more with proper assistance, he would reform,

and give univerſal ſatisfaction. Thus he drew forth various ſums, which, without ſhame, he beſtowed upon flatterers, panders to his pleaſures, or an army of foreigners, which he kept to intimidate his native dominions.

At length, however, the parliament, fatigued with his unperforming promiſes, reſolved to refuſe his demands for the future: they therefore entered into an aſſociation, and the city of London was invited to accede. At the head of this powerful combination was the earl of Leiceſter, the king's brother-in-law, who had riſen into power merely by his maſter's profuſeneſs. The king, by a ſtrange abſurdity of thinking, as he became more feeble and unpopular, increaſed his demands for freſh ſupplies. He was worſted in France, and obliged to purchaſe a ſhameful truce; he was conquered by the Welſh, and became contemptible to Scotland: yet ſtill he continued to haraſs his own ſubjects with his uſual extortion, as if he deſigned to create in them that awe with which he failed to impreſs his enemies. The barons, finding him incorrigible, after an experience of near forty years, at length ſhook off their allegiance, and ſent the king notice that they renounced the fealty they owed him, and now conſidered him only as the common enemy of mankind.

Both ſides were now up in arms, and the country again became the theatre of civil ſlaughter. The firſt advantages in this conteſt were in favour of the king. He was a coward in danger, and ſhewed himſelf a tyrant in victory. Fluſhed with the ſucceſs with which his arms had been juſt crowned, he reſolved to march directly to London. He made no doubt but the city, intimidated

timidated by his late advantages, would declare in his favour; and, had he formerly behaved with paternal indulgence, perhaps his preſent hopes would not have been groundleſs; but a remembrance of his former ill uſage repreſſed their loyalty. Inſtead of opening their gates to receive a conqueror, they ſent forth an army to oppoſe his entry. Henry ſtopped his forces in a panic, and returned to meet the earl of Leiceſter, who advanced with his army near Lewes, in the county of Suſſex.

All hopes of reconciliation being now laid aſide, nothing was thought of but the deciſion of the ſword. The earl advancing with his army, drew up in order of battle near the king, who prepared, though with reluctance, to receive him. The battle was begun by prince Edward, the king's ſon, who attacked the Londoners with great fury, and drove them off the field of battle: on the other hand, the king's body of forces were defeated, after a ſhort reſiſtance, by the earl of Leiceſter. His majeſty, who commanded them in perſon, gave no inſtances of valour, but tamely ſuffered himſelf to be taken priſoner; which ſoon paved the way for the defeat of the whole army, and prince Edward's ſurrendering at diſcretion.

The king and the prince being thus priſoners, the barons took all advantages that the moſt refined policy could ſuggeſt. They knew how to operate upon the king's puſillanimity, and obliged him to ſend letters to all the governos of the kingdom, to renounce their obedience, and ſurrender his caſtles to the conquerors. They who drew their ſword againſt their king, ſays the proverb, ſhould fling the ſcabbard away. The barons,

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with this in view, were reſolved entirely to new model the conſtitution, for they now knew that a compoſition with the royal captive was impoſſible; and at this period we muſt fix the date of Engliſh liberty. The privileges of the king, the barons, and the clergy, were but different modes of various uſurpations; the commonalty had little or no ſhare in the legiſlature, and only looked tamely on, or were led to ſlaughter, without hopes of ſharing the rewards of victory.

The barons and clergy, however, now ſaw, that the government could not readily be transferred, without ſome greater power than they were at preſent poſſeſſed of. The dethroning a king, the reſiſting a pope, were actions that they could not defend upon the principles of the times: they called in, therefore, an aid till now entirely unknown in the world; they called in the ſanction of the people. The authority of the barons, clergy, and the people of England, were ſet to oppoſe the royal and papal authority. And here I cannot but admire the ſtrange concurrence of circumſtances which brought this firſt dawn of liberty into being. To effect this, it was firſt neceſſary that England ſhould be poſſeſſed of a conteſted foreign dominion; that the king ſhould have frequent neceſſities for money to preſerve it; that this neceſſarily ſhould produce a dependence upon the barons and clergy, and that this dependence ſhould give them in return, a ſhare of power: it was neceſſary, that the intereſts of the clergy ſhould be ſeparated from thoſe of the crown, and ſhould concur in the oppoſition: in ſhort, it was neceſſary that the powers on both ſides ſhould be ſo exactly balanced, that ſo ſmall a weight as that of

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the people, as it was then conſidered, ſhould be thrown in to turn the ſcale.

A parliament was called, in which the king was obliged to give orders, that four knights from each country ſhould ſit in order to repreſent their reſpective ſhires, and deliberate for the general benefit of the people. This is the firſt rude outline of an Engliſh houſe of commons. The people had been gaining ſome conſideration ſince the diminution of the feudal laws, and the eſtabliſhment of corporation charters, by which men were, in ſome meaſure, reſcued from the power of their maſters, and permitted to improve a ſpirit of freedom in towns. As arts increaſed, the number of theſe little republics (if I may ſo call them) increaſed; and we find them, at the preſent period, of conſequence enough to be adopted into a partnerſhip of the legiſlation. But theſe privileges were granted by the barons merely to confirm their own; and, could they have now agreed among themſelves, they might have continued in poſſeſſion of all the authority of the kingdom, and the conſtitution might thus ſettle into a confirmed ariſtocracy: but they grew jealous of each other's power; they began to fear the earl of Leiceſter, who had abrogated kingly authority, and was intent only upon eſtabliſhing deſpotiſm. This produced new ſtruggles, and theſe ended once more in the reſtoration of the king and his family: the earl of Leiceſter was defeated and ſlain upon the field of battle. Henry, who had been led about as a captive, and always expoſed in the front of that army which had dethroned him, was once more ſet at liberty by his victorious ſon Edward; and though, to the end of life, he perſevered in his former follies,

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yet the people retained that ſhare of liberty which they had acquired in the turbulent parts of his reign. A ſpirit of liberty had now diffuſed itſelf from the incorporated towns through the whole maſs of people, and ever after blazed forth at convenient ſeaſons: afterwards, whoever loſt, they were ſure to be gainers; and if in the conteſt they laid down their lives, and ſuffered all the hardſhips of war, yet they conſidered thoſe calamities as trivial, if liberty were left improved and better ſecured to their poſterity.

LETTER XVI.

AT the death of Henry III. Edward, his ſon and ſucceſſor, was employed in the holy wars, in which, though he gained nothing to the cauſe for which he fought, he acquired the character of an excellent general and an intrepid ſoldier. As he came to an undiſputed throne, the oppoſite intereſts were proportionably feeble: the barons were exhauſted by mutual diſſenſions, the clergy hated the pope, and the people, as is evident from ſome inſurrections at that time, were not much ſatisfied with the clergy. It was natural to ſuppoſe, that a politic and a conquering prince would take this opportunity of giving the royal prerogative its former ſplendor and authority. However, he was ſatisfied with moderate power, and only laboured to be terrible to his enemies.

A. D. 1272.

The Welſh had long enjoyed their own laws and cuſtoms. They were the only remains of the ancient Britons, and had ſtill preſerved their freedom and their country uncontaminated by foreign

reign invaſions. Incapable, however, of reſiſting their enemies in the plain, their chief defence was in their inacceſſible mountains, thoſe natural bulwarks of their country. Whenever England was diſturbed by factions at home, or its troops called off to wars abroad, the Welſh would continually pour in their irregular troops, and lay the open country waſte. No ſituation can be worſe, than that of ſeveral petty principalities bordering upon each other, under different commanders, and purſuing different intereſts. Senſible of this, Edward led a powerful army againſt Lewellyn, their king: he had frequently before been chaſtiſed, and obliged to beg peace, but was ever ready to ſeize an opportunity of making an advantageous war. Upon the approach of Edward, he took refuge among the inacceſſible mountains of Snowden, and there maintained his poſt without danger. The king of England, not diſcouraged by the difficulty of the ſituation, was reſolved to inveſt his army, by ſecuring all the avenues by which he might eſcape. Poſted as Lewellyn was, he might certainly have haraſſed his enemies without ever himſelf being deſtroyed, had not a trifling victory over a body of his beſiegers induced him to come down and face the enemy upon more equal terms. A ſmall advantage gained was interpreted as the beginning of the completion of Merlin's prophecy, in which he was to poſſeſs the whole kingdom without a rival. Flattered with ſuch expectations, he deſcends into the plain, without conſidering the inequality of his forces. The Welſh and the Engliſh now, for the laſt time, drew up againſt each other. Lewellyn, after having performed all that courage and deſperation could inſpire, found himſelf, at laſt, fatally deceived:

ceived: he was killed upon the field of battle, and his forces utterly routed. With him expired the diſtinction of his nation: it was ſoon after united to the kingdom of England, made a principality, and given to the eldeſt ſon to the crown. Foreign conqueſts might add to the glory, but the preſent added to the felicity of the kingdom. The Welſh were now blended with their conquerors, and, in the revolution of a few ages, all national animoſity was entirely forgotten.

His native dominions being thus freed from every invader, the king ſoon had an opportunity to increaſe his power, by the diſſenſion of his neighbours. The crown of Scotland, after the death of Alexander the Third, became deſtitute of an apparent heir. John Bruce and Robert Baliol divided all the ſuffrages of the kingdom. A civil war impended; and nothing but an umpire, appointed by mutual conſent, could determine the conteſt without blood. For this purpoſe, by a fatal miſtake in the politics of the Scots, Edward was choſen, accepted the mediation with pleaſure, came to Norham, and, from being choſen umpire, claimed a ſuperiority over the country whoſe crown had been ſubmitted to his deciſion, and aſſerted his right to the government. To wear the appearance of juſtice, however, after long deliberations, in which great care was taken to inculcate his right to the crown of Scotland, he fixed Baliol on the throne, leſs as king than as a vaſſal of England.

The firſt ſtep taken by Edward, after placing Baliol on the throne, was ſufficient to convince the Scots of his intentions to ſtretch his ſuperior prerogative to the utmoſt. A merchant of Gaſcoigne

coigne preſented a pecition to him, implying that Alexander, late king of Scotland, was indebted to him a certain ſum, ſtill unpaid, notwithſtanding all his ſolicitations to the new king for payment. Edward eagerly embraced this opportuni y of exerciſing his new right, and ſummoned the king of Scotland to appear at Weſtminſter, to anſwer, in perſon, to the complaint which was brought againſt him by the merchant. Upon ſubjects equally trivial he ſent ſix different ſummons, at different times, in one year; ſo that the Scots king ſoon perceived himſelf only poſſeſſed of the name without the authority. Willing, therefore, to ſhake off ſo troubleſome a maſter, Baliol revolted, and procured the pope's abſolution for the infraction of his former oaths of homage. Edward now offered the crown to Bruce, who accepted it with joy; and thus a ſtrong party of the Scots was added in ſtrengthening the Engliſh king to ſubdue their native country. Edward, at the head of a numerous army, marched into the country: numberleſs were the victories gained on one ſide and the other, in which the conquerors acquired much honour, but either country loſt the braveſt of its ſubjects. But wars like theſe, though minutely related by every hiſtorian, are ſcarce worth treaſuring in any memory, but that of an herald or antiquarian. The whole may be compriſed in the following ſhort deſcription: one barbarous nation meets another in ſome plain, generally by mutual appointment: little art, evolution, evaſion, or ſubterfuge, was practiſed or known; they ruſhed upon each other, and numbers and tumult generally decided the victory. The revolutions of the government, and not the deſcription of battles fought in theſe reigns, ſerve to adorn the page of hiſtory.

hiſtory. At one ſeaſon Scotland was brought to the loweſt degree of humiliation, and Edward had laid a plan, which probably he ever had in view, of uniting it, as a conqueſt, to the crown of England. But his ſcheme proved abortive; the time of that kingdom's deliverance was at hand: they found ſafety in deſpair, and, upon the king's return to England, they once more ſallied down from their mountains upon the Engliſh army which he had left, and gained a complete victory.

This was terrible news to Edward, who had already built upon that kingdom as his own. He was now implacably exaſperated againſt the Scots, and reſolved to take a ſignal vengeance: to this purpoſe, he ſummoned all the vaſſals of the crown, without diſtinction, to be ready at a time and place particularly appointed. His intention was, to march into the heart of that kingdom, and deſtroy it, to uſe his own expreſſion, from ſea to ſea. He ſoon ſaw himſelf at the head of the fineſt army England had ever produced: the Scots trembled at his approach, but death ſtopped the courſe of his intended devaſtations.

As ſoon as he perceived that his diſorder was to be fatal, he ſent for the prince his ſon, whom he had appointed to ſucceed him, and, taking him by the hand, earneſtly recommended, with his dying breath, three things: he firſt enjoined him not to recal Gaveſtone, a flatterer, who he knew would poiſon his principles; he next deſired, that his heart might be ſent to the holy ſepulchre; and, thirdly, he recommended him to proſecute the war with the Scots, till he had entirely ſubdued them, deſiring his bones might be carried about at the head of the army, the more effectually to ſtrike terror into the enemy he had ſo often ſubdued.

England began to grow truly formidable under this reign: the oppoſition of the barons was but feeble and ill-ſupported; the monarch was, in ſome meaſure, abſolute, though he was prudent enough never to exert his power. He is accuſed of ſeverity, and it is probable he might have exerted juſtice with too heavy an hand; yet it ſhould be particularly remarked, that he was the firſt who began to diſpenſe indiſcriminate juſtice. Before him, the people who roſe in inſurrections were puniſhed in the moſt ſevere manner, by the ſword or the gibbet, while the nobility, who were almoſt always refractory, were treated with a degree of lenity which encouraged future diſobedience: a ſmall fine, which, in fact, only fell upon their poor dependents, generally wiped off their offences. Edward puniſhed both with equal ſeverity.

However, let us here remark the alterations in the ſpirit of the times. The Engliſh, now incorporated with their fierce Norman conquerors, were no longer the tame conſenting people they formerly appeared, and always were prepared to reaſon with that authority which they could not reſiſt. With this ſpirit of oppoſition a ſpirit of cruelty alſo ſeemed to enter: regardleſs of their own lives, the people did not ſeem very ſolicitous about the lives of others. The penal laws now began to aſſume more rigour: in the times of William the Conqueror, it was a law, that no man ſhould be puniſhed with death; but that law was at preſent quite laid aſide, and ſeveral crimes were rendered capital.

But what gave the reign of Edward a true value with poſterity, was the degree of power the people began to aſſume during this period. The clergy

and

and the barons he conſidered, in ſome meaſure, as rivals; and, to weaken their force, he gave authority to the commons: a law was enacted, by which no tax could be levied without their conſent. His intentions were to render himſelf abſolute by their aſſiſtance; and, it is but too probable, he might have become ſo, had he lived to put his deſigns in execution: but he died at a time he was beginning to throw off parliamentary reſtrictions, and left the people a ſhare of authority, which had been given them for very different purpoſes than the promotion of liberty. The moſt healing medicines are often extracted from poiſons. In ſhort, whatever Edward's character was as a man, as a king, he was of infinite ſervice to his country.

LETTER XVII.

IT was long an opinion of the Engliſh, and grounded on obſervations made from the days of king Arthur, that between two valiant and able princes in this nation, there always intervened a king of leſs ſenſe and courage, *moins ſuffiſans de ſens et de proueſſe*. That there was ſomething in the remark, you have hitherto ſeen in ſeveral ſucceſſions.

No monarch could come to a crown with more advantageous omens than Edward II. *A. D.* 1307. an army prepared for victory, a people united, and an undiſputed ſucceſſion. But he ſoon gave reaſons to fear his future conduct, by the commencement of his reign. Regardleſs of his father's dying admonitions, he diſcontinued the war with Scotland, and recalled Gaveſtone, his favourite, from exile.

Gaveſtone

Gaveſtone was a foreigner by birth, adorned with every accompliſhment of perſon and mind that could create affection, but deſtitute of thoſe qualities of heart and underſtanding that ſerve to procure eſteem. He was beautiful, witty, brave, but, at the ſame time, vicious, effeminate, and debauched: he had aſſiſted in all Edward's youthful extravagancies and pleaſures; had been, to uſe a Latin expreſſion, his *arbiter elegantiarum*; and thus had ſecured this young voluptuous monarch's affections.

A prudent king may have private friends, but ſhould never retain a public favourite: royal favour ſhould ſhine with indiſcriminate luſtre, and the monarch ſhould ever guard againſt raiſing thoſe he moſt loves to the higheſt preferments. In being thus biaſſed by his affections, he will probably be induced to reward talents unequal to the burthen of affairs, or impatient of the fatigues of application. Such was the caſe of Edward, with regard to his new favourite: he loaded him with favours, at a time when he was giving up his title to the ſovereignty of Scotland, which had been ſo hardly earned by his predeceſſor.

The barons, at this time, were not ſo entirely humbled, but that they reſented a conduct ſo injurious to the intereſts of the kingdom as well as their own. Gaveſtone's pride, his being a foreigner, his inſolence, ſoon raiſed a ſtrong party againſt him: an army was formed to oppoſe his adminiſtration: Gaveſtone was taken and beheaded without even the formality of a trial. Thus you perceive a ſpirit of cruelty beginning to enter the nation. The death of Gaveſtone was probably, ſupported by precedents found in the former

mer reign. The ſucceſſors of Edward the Firſt copied after him in his faults alone. The vices of conquering monarchs and great kings are ever moſt dangerous, becauſe they moſt generally produce imitation.

From this time the ſcaffolds were drenched with Engliſh blood: each party, as it happened to prove victorious, brought their priſoners, as traitors, to the block or the gibbet: never was ſo much blood ſpilt in a juridical manner in England, as in this hideous reign. The Scots, during theſe ſtorms, endeavoured to fortify their government: they conquered the Engliſh in more than one battle. Robert Bruce, being made king, became powerful from the diviſions of the Engliſh, who pretended to be his maſters.

Edward, in the mean time, ſeemed only intent on proſecuting his pleaſures, or becoming formidable to his own ſubjects. The mutual hatred between him and the barons ſeemed daily to increaſe; or, in other words, as he ſtill became more deſpicable in the eyes of the people, the barons, lately depreſſed, grew into power. His ſupineneſs gave them an opportunity of executing all their deſigns, ſo that at laſt he ſuffered himſelf to be taken a priſoner; but he was ſoon after releaſed, upon a promiſe of future amendment. A certain number of the barons were admitted into his council, and he gave his word to perform nothing without their conſent and approbation: but he was only born for misfortunes. This monarch, of an eaſy nature, and who, probably, if born in a private ſtation, would have been conſidered as a worthy man, could not live without a favourite. Into the place which Gaveſtone held in his affections,

Hugh

Hugh Spencer, a youth of great addreſs and many accompliſhments, ſucceeded. This young gentleman, no way intimidated by the misfortunes of Gaveſtone, in ſimilar circumſtances purſued his conduct in every particular: he even went beyond him in pride, avarice, and prodigality. An univerſal diſcontent ſoon became viſible: all the vices of the king were imputed to young Spencer alone, and his own were enough to ſink him into ruin. The barons, therefore, once more combined to deſtroy his favourite, who was, in reality, without a protector: they therefore baniſhed him and his father out of the kingdom, with great threats, if ever he attempted to return. This indignity to the king ſeemed to rouſe him from his former lethargy: the queen alſo, a bold, haughty woman, endeavoured to ſtimulate him to revenge. She had received an affront on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, by being denied admittance, by the governor, into the caſtle of Leeds, on the way. She therefore perſuaded her weak conſort, that the preſent conjuncture was very favourable for freeing himſelf from the power of the barons, and that puniſhing the governor of Leeds would intimidate them ſo far as to prevent any future oppoſition. Her advice was embraced with avidity: the king raiſed an army without oppoſition; he beſieged the caſtle of Leeds; the governor was taken, and the queen now had an opportunity of ſatiating her revenge, by having him beheaded.

Succeſs only ſeemed to puſh this weak prince on to new violence: he beſieged the caſtles of ſeveral other barons, and became maſter of them with equal eaſe. To complete his contempt for all former compacts, he recalled his young favourite, Spencer, once more from baniſhment. We

may eaſily, upon this occaſion, perceive how much the barons were declined from that degree of power they poſſeſſed two or three reigns before. The monarch, at preſent, that oppreſſed them, was voluptuous, ignorant, and a coward, in the general opinion of the people; yet, feeble as he was, the barons were ſcarce able to reſiſt him: the power of the people was now grown truly formidable, and Edward had addreſs enough to procure a part of them to ſecond his pretenſions. The king now, therefore, in the meridian of power, proſecuted the moſt rigorous meaſures: the queen, cruel by nature, and Spencer, his favourite, actuated by revenge, ſtimulated him to numberleſs acts of ſeverity. Among others who periſhed in the oppoſition, was Thomas, Earl of Lancaſter. This nobleman had always been ſignalized for his valour among the confederate lords, and was a peculiar oppoſer of the growing power of the family of the Spencers. He was taken fighting, at the head of a body of forces, which he had, in vain, endeavoured to rally. He had no great hopes to expect any favour from judges who were his enemies from perſonal motives: he was condemned to be quartered as a traitor; but, from a regard to his ſtation, the king changed his puniſhment to beheading. In this manner nine other lords were executed at York, as a terror to the kingdom; but theſe terrors could not ſecure a monarch who was in himſelf contemptible. Whatever might have been the Earl of Lancaſter's real character, his death left it uncertain, whether he acted with views to get himſelf created king, or was only the champion of public liberty. However that be, the people in general had his memory in great veneration, and conſidered him as a martyr. We may by this ſee

what

what ſide in this quarrel was eſpouſed by the clergy: immediately after the earl's death, miracles were ſaid to be wrought at his tomb, and every pretended miracle of this kind was productive of a thouſand enemies to the king.

The favourite Spencer and his father ſtill gave an unbounded ſcope to their revenge: not content with putting to death the heads of the oppoſite party, with depriving others of their eſtates, and with condemning great numbers to perpetual baniſhment, they were reſolved to level their rage againſt Roger Mortimer, now actually in their cuſtody, and confined within the Tower. There were few circumſtances that could apparently ſcreen him from their reſentment: he had been openly in arms, and active in the oppoſition; he had no character to render his puniſhment unpopular, and none that he knew to intercede for him with the king; yet he found his puniſhment remitted, to his aſtoniſhment, notwithſtanding all the ſolicitations of his enemies to the contrary. The queen was fallen in love with this youth, and uſed all her intereſt to procure his pardon: an intimacy had actually commenced between them; and this protection, with which he was publickly honoured by her, drew down the reſentment of the two favourites. In this oppoſition of intereſts, Edward ſeemed entirely paſſive; he wiſhed to oblige both parties, and one day gave orders to ſcreen young Mortimer from purſuit, and the next, to ſecure him wherever he could be detected: the feeble king knew not how to refuſe any requeſt, when he loved thoſe who made the demand.

A diſſention thus between two parties, who ſhared the affections of the king, muſt ſoon terminate in the diſmiſſion of either. To get the

queen removed, the Spencers contrived to perſuade her to go upon a certain negociation to the court of her brother, the king of France. With this propoſal, though from her enemies, the queen readily complied; ſhe foreſaw it would give her an uncontrouled liberty of enjoying the company of her gallant, and might give her power of being revenged upon his oppreſſors. Philip the Fair, who was at this time upon the throne of France, purſued the politics of every wiſe king: he encouraged the queen, his ſiſter, to oppoſe Edward, her huſband; and thus, by dividing his enemies, he hoped to weaken them. Thus heartened, ſhe loudly enveighed againſt the favourites of the king, levied troops in France to oppoſe their power, and with this army landed in England, where her expectations were anſwered, in being joined by a powerful body of malecontents. Mortimer, her lover, was with her at the head of theſe troops, at the ſame time that the favourite Spencer was the heart of the oppoſite party.

Edward was little able to withſtand his enemies: all his endeavours to raiſe troops proved ineffectual: none would venture to expoſe themſelves in the king's defence, for they ſaw that an ignominious death muſt be the conſequence of a defeat and ingratitude of victory. The queen took Spencer, the father, at Briſtol. This gentleman, fourſcore and ten years old, had paſſed a youth of tranquillity and reputation; he had been eſteemed and loved by all the kingdom, but his fond compliance with his ſon's ambition, involved his old age in the turbulence of faction: he was immediately hanged up in his armour, without even the formality of a trial. His unhappy ſon did not long ſurvive him: he was taken, with a few more, attending

tending the king their maſter, into an obſcure convent in Wales. Revenge, and not juſtice, prompted all the puniſhments of this reign. The queen had not patience to ſtay till the meeting of a parliament to deſtroy her enemy; ſhe ordered him to be produced before the inſulting populace, enjoyed herſelf the pleaſure of ſeeing him led to the place of execution, where he was hanged on a gibbet fifty feet high. Several other lords ſhared his fate, all deſerving pity indeed, had they not formerly juſtified this inhumanity by ſetting a cruel example.

The unhappy king now abandoned, ſaw himſelf in the power of his enemies, without a ſingle friend to ſtand between him and univerſal reproach: he was conducted to the capital, amidſt the inſults and reproaches of his ſubjects; confined in the Tower, judged by the parliament, and ſolemnly depoſed. He was aſſigned a penſion for his ſupport; his ſon, a youth of fourteen, was crowned king, and the queen appointed regent during his minority.

The depoſed monarch but a ſhort time ſurvived his misfortunes: he was ſent from priſon to priſon a wretched outcaſt, and the ſport of his mercenary keepers: in theſe journeys they made him ſuffer all the indignities that cruel and ingenious villany could deviſe: among others, it is ſaid, they ſhaved him for ſport in the open fields, uſing water from the neighbouring ditch. The genius of the people muſt ſurely have ſuffered a gradual deterioration, or they would never have permitted the venerable head of majeſty, a monarch, whoſe greateſt fault was the violence of his friendſhips, to be uſed with ſo much indignity. What firm-

neſs ſoever the depoſed prince had hitherto ſhewn in his misfortunes, it left him upon this occaſion; he looked upon his mercileſs inſulters with an air of fallen majeſty, and ſhed a torrent of tears: the cruelty of his death alone was wanting to terminate a life of complete miſery. The laſt place of his impriſonment was Berkeley-caſtle: here he was kept totally deſtitute of all the comforts, and almoſt all the neceſſaries of life. But theſe miſeries were not long to continue: the two keepers, entering his apartment one night as he lay in bed, to ſtifle his cries, covered his face with a pillow, and then, with a cruelty not to be paralleled, thruſt an horn pipe up his body, through which they ran a red-hot iron, and burnt his bowels: his horrid ſhrieks, however, were heard at a diſtance from the caſtle, and, though all poſſible care was taken to conceal it, his murder was ſoon after diſcovered by one of the accomplices. Misfortunes like his muſt ever create pity, and a puniſhment, ſo diſproportionate to his guilt, in ſome meaſure ſoften the ſeverity of reproach.

LETTER XVIII.

WE now begin to have ſome faint idea of the origin of our preſent happy conſtitution; and, as I am going to lead to a reign which gave new ſtrength to the people, permit me to entertain you a moment with the ſpirit of thinking in the nation, at the juncture I

A. D. 1327. am ſpeaking of. By the continual admiſſion of foreigners, in ſeveral of the preceding reigns, the number of the commons was

ſurpriſingly

furprifingly increafed; and the introduction of fome new manufactures, the making of woollen cloths and glafs, for inftance, ftill decreafed the retinue of the nobles, and threw greater numbers of the inhabitants into chartered towns. The barons, however, ftill continued to refide at their caftles in the country, gave laws to the peafants around them, and exercifed a defpotic authority over all their dependents. The clergy had, for fome time, been at variance with the pope, and this diffention contributed to ftrip the mafk of fanctity from both: the divifion of the church was a moft certain means of rendering it contemptible, fince all its ftrength lay only in the influence it had over the minds of its votaries. But there was another principle, which had been, for fome time, operating, and which, in time, promifed to be a certain means of diminifhing the power of the barons and the clergy; I mean a diminution of *perfonal fervice* in war. In former times, every vaffal was to appear, at the command of his lord, with horfe attendants, and all the apparatus neceffary for a campaign. If the nobility or vaffals of the crown refufed to march, the king was unable to compel them. In this manner, a combination of the nobility had it ever in their power to give laws to the crown, becaufe they were not only the deliberating power, but the acting power alfo: but, from the increafe of the people, from the more extenfive ufe of money inftead of barter, and from the number of independent foreigners, ready to accept pay; from thefe caufes, I fay, the kings began to levy armies without the affiftance of the nobility. Monarchs now only wanted money to be at the head of armies as numerous and powerful as they thought proper: wherever money

was, there lay power; and the people, by traffic and induſtry, beginning to grow rich, they were neceſſarily admitted into ſome ſhare in the legiſlature. Thus we ſee the nobility, the clergy, and the people, different from what they were two or three reigns before this; and the ſtrength of the king did not ſuffer a leſs mutation. Former monarchs might be conſidered only as the firſt and moſt powerful baron of the land: a baron was in miniature, what the king was in the great. The monarch had ſcarce any real power but what he derived from his own crown-lands and vaſſals: when he was reſolved to exert his ſtrength, he could only command his own tenants, and thoſe who held immediately under him: the barons were ſummoned, indeed; but, if they were diſpleaſed, they might refuſe their aſſiſtance, and all their dependents were obliged to imitate their example; theſe acknowledged ſubjection, not to the king, but their own maſter; and nothing but a civil war with the refractory nobleman could bring him to juſtice. But the face of the old conſtitution was now beginning to be changed: every order in the ſtate began to have a mutual dependence on each other; the power of the king to extend to the higheſt and the loweſt of his ſubjects; and oppoſe intereſts to occur for the benefit of all.

This change of government ſeemed to influence the manners of the nation; a ſpirit of gallantry prevailed, which, probably, took its firſt riſe in thoſe eaſtern countries, which had long been famous for every luxurious refinement. Hiſtorians repreſent the kingdom as immerſed in debauchery and licentiouſneſs; that ladies, laying aſide their modeſty, ſeemed to glory in the loſs of their virtue. Nothing, ſay they, was more common,

mon, than to ſee them riding in troops to the tournament, dreſſed like cavaliers, with ſwords by their ſides, their horſes adorned with rich trappings, and behaving with more than maſculine effrontery. Whatever monks may obſerve upon this ſubject, this aukwardly gallant behaviour, in ſome meaſure, expreſſed a degree of growing elegance in the times, and ſhewed that the people were emerging from primitive barbarity.

Under Edward III. the conſtitution of our parliaments, and the whole frame of our government, became reduced into a better form. A ſpirit of liberty breathes in all his laws; yet no king knew how to make himſelf more abſolute. As the father loſt his crown and his life, in the moſt miſerable manner, by ſuffering himſelf to be governed by his miniſters, and protecting them from the reſentments of the people; ſo the ſon very early exerted his own authority, and freed himſelf from the guardianſhip, or rather ſubjection, of his mother, the queen, and her paramour, who had long oppreſſed the nation, and diſhonoured him, by their ſcandalous conduct. Mortimer was dragged from the queen's apartment, in the moſt ignominious manner, while ſhe implored all the while that they would ſpare the gentle Mortimer. But the young king was deaf to her intreaties; the pity which ſhe once refuſed her unhappy huſband was now denied her: the parliament condemned Mortimer to die, without being permitted to plead, as he had ſerved Spencer ſometime before. He fell by the hands of the hangman; and Iſabella was confined to the caſtle of Riſings, with a penſion of three thouſand pounds a year. Her confinement was ſevere, though ſhe ſurvived her diſgrace twenty five years, and, abandoned to univerſal

contempt, wept in ſolitude rather her misfortunes than her vices.

Edward III. well knew, that a conquering monarch was fitteſt to pleaſe a warlike people. The Scots had long triumphed with impunity; he therefore began his reign by reducing them to the moſt diſtreſsful circumſtances, and once more brought them to acknowledge his ſovereignty over their crown. But he was ſoon drawn off from theſe conqueſts to objects of greater victories: a new ſcene began to be opened in France, and Europe, in ſuſpenſe, began to doubt whether Edward's claims to that kingdom were ſecured to him by right of inheritance, or by the rights of conqueſt. France, at that time, was by no means ſo extenſive as at preſent: it comprehended neither Dauphine, nor Provence, nor Franche Compte. It was rendered ſtill more feeble from the nature of its government: ſeveral powerful neighbours, who pretended to be vaſſals of that crown, rather ſerved to weaken than ſtrengthen the monarch.

The people of that kingdom were unhappy, from their mutual diviſions; and the king, at that time, was ſtill more ſo. The three ſons of Philip the fair, in full parliament, accuſed their wives of adultery; they were each condemned, and ordered to be impriſoned for life. Lewis Huttin, the eldeſt ſon, cauſed his wife to be ſtrangled: her lovers died by a new kind of puniſhment; they were flead alive.

After the death of Lewis Huttin, king of France, a queſtion aroſe about the validity of the Salic law; a law made in the early period of the French monarchy, importing that no woman ſhould rule. As this is a ſubject of ſome importance in the Engliſh hiſtory, it is neceſſary to expatiate here a little.

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They had hitherto never enquired, in France, whether a female could ſucceed in the kingdom. Laws are only made to regulate what may happen by what has happened already, and, as an inſtance of this kind had never occurred, there were no laws to direct them. Precedents, in leſſer inſtances, were the only guides in ſuch a circumſtance; but theſe precedents had varied with the occaſion. The parliament of France had often adjudged the ſucceſſion to women; as Artois was formerly given to a female, in prejudice of the male heir: the ſucceſſion of Champagne had been, on ſome occaſions, given to the daughters, and, on others, they were held unqualified to ſucceed. We thus ſee that right changed with power; and juſtice, in ſuch a caſe, was either unknown or diſregarded.

Lewis Huttin left an only daughter, and two brothers: the elder, Philip the Tall, aſſumed the crown, in prejudice of Huttin's daughter, and attempted to cover his uſurpation by the Salic law. The younger brother, Charles the Fair, jealous of his elder brother's fortune, oppoſed his pretenſions, and aſſerted the daughter's right to ſucceed. This cauſe was carried before the French parliament, and decided in favour of Philip. This monarch enjoyed the crown but a ſhort time, and, dying, left only daughters to ſucceed him. Charles the Fair, however, was now of a different ſentiment from what he had been formerly; he now maintained the law for the excluſion of females, becauſe it made in his favour. He ſeized the crown without oppoſition, and enjoyed it for ſome time, but, dying, left his wife with child. As there was now no apparent heir, the next heir to the crown was to be regent, and two perſons aſſerted their claim upon this occaſion: Edward III.

had laid his claim, as being, by his mother Iſabella, who was daughter of Philip the Fair, and ſiſter to the three laſt kings of France, rightful heir to the crown. Philip Valois, on the other hand, had ſeized upon it, as being the next heir by the male ſucceſſion. The claims of Philip were preferred; he was conſtituted regent of France, and, the queen being unfortunately brought-to-bed of a daughter, he was unanimouſly elected king. He was crowned by his ſubjects with univerſal ſatisfaction, had the appellation of Philip the Furtunate given him; and to this he added thoſe which might merit good fortune, virtue and juſtice. Among other inſtances of his felicity, he might reckon that of the homage paid him by Edward, his rival, which he came to offer at Amiens: however, this homage was ſoon followed by a war, and Edward diſputed that crown, of which he had juſt before declared himſelf the vaſſal.

A brewer at Ghent was one of thoſe who gave the greateſt aſſiſtance to Edward in this war, and determined him to aſſume the title of King of France. This citizen's name was James Ardevet, grown too powerful for a ſubject, and one of thoſe, according to Machiavel, whom kings ought to flatter or deſtroy. Thus aſſiſted, Edward made a powerful invaſion. Upon landing, he was challenged by Philip to try their fortune upon equal terms, in ſome appointed plain. Edward accepted the challenge, for in every action this prince affected the hero; but, ſome obſtacles intervening, the war was proſecuted in the uſual manner, by taking every advantage where it happened to offer.

In theſe battles there is little material for inſtruction, nor can they afford any thing more entertaining, than the hiſtory of a maroding party

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in one of our modern gazettes. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that ſeveral ſkirmiſhes only drew on the great and deciſive victory of Creſſy, which every honeſt Engliſhman boaſts of to this hour. In this memorable battle, Philip was at the head of an hundred thouſand men, and Edward only of thirty thouſand. The Black Prince, his ſon, as yet but a youth of fifteen, commanded the firſt line of the Engliſh army; the ſecond was conducted by the earls of Northampton and Arundel; and the body of reſerve was headed by the king in perſon. He and the prince of Wales had that morning received the ſacrament with great devotion, and his behaviour denoted the calm intrepidity of a man reſolved on conqueſt or death. The army being thus arranged, the king rode from rank to rank, with a chearful countenance; bade his ſoldiers remember the honour of their country, while his eloquence animated the whole army to a degree of enthuſiaſtic expectation. To oppoſe the Engliſh, Philip had drawn up his formidable army in three diviſions alſo; the firſt commanded by John of Luxemburgh, the blind king of Bohemia; the ſecond was led by the count of Alençon; and Philip, in perſon, commanded the body of reſerve. This was the firſt battle that the Black Prince had ſeen; but he now appeared foremoſt in the very ſhock, and continued for ſome time, to turn the fortune of the day; but his courage would have been ſoon oppreſſed by numbers, had not the earl of Northampton come to his relief. The very thickeſt of the battle was now gathered round him, and the valour of a boy filled even veterans with aſtoniſhment: but their ſurpriſe at his courage could not but give way to their fears for his perſon;

ſon; apprehenſive that ſome misfortune might happen to him in the end, they ſent the king word to haſten to the prince's relief. Edward, who had all this time viewed the engagement from a windmill, with great deliberation aſked if his ſon was dead; and, being anſwered, that he ſtill lived and was giving aſtoniſhing inſtanccs of valour, *Then tell my generals*, cried the king, *that he ſhall have no aſſiſtance from me: the honour of this day ſhall be his, and he ſhall be indebted to his own merit alone for victory*. Upon this occaſion thirty thouſand of the French were killed on the field of battle, and the day after they experienced another defeat. This victory is partly aſcribed to four pieces of artillery, which the Engliſh firſt made uſe of here, and the uſe of which had been but lately diſcovered. Edward, after two victories gained in two days, took Calais, of which the Engliſh remained in poſſeſſion two hundred and ten years.

This war which was at once carried on in three different counties in France, thinned the inhabitants of the invaded country, and drained that of the invaders. But a deſtruction ſtill more terrible than that of war, contributed, at this time, to deſolate the wretched inhabitants of Europe. A peſtilence more terrible than any mentioned in former hiſtory, which had already almoſt diſpeopled Aſia and Africa, came to ſettle upon the weſtern world, with increaſed malignity. The fourth part of the people were cut off by it: in London it raged with ſuch violence, that in one year's ſpace there were buried, in Charter-houſe churchyard, above fifty thouſand perſons. It was in the midſt of this terrible ſcourge of nature, that the ambition of Edward and Philip were contending

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for new conqueſts, and adding to the calamities of mankind. Theſe ravages, however, were ſilently repaired by commerce and induſtry; thoſe arts, which were then deſpiſed by princes, were laying the ſeeds of future opulence and increaſed population. Theſe arts were travelling, gradually, from Italy, and had begun to find harbour in England: the refinements and the pleaſures of ſenſe every day began to improve, but intellectual refinement was yet unknown; ſenſual enjoyments muſt ever be carried to ſome height, before mankind can find leiſure to taſte for entertainments a more delicate nature.

During the Engliſh victories on the continent, the Scots ever willing to embrace a favourable opportunity of rapine or revenge, invaded England with a numerous army. This unexpected invaſion, at ſuch a juncture, alarmed the Engliſh, but, however, was not capable of diſheartening them. Lionel, Edward's ſon, who was left guardian of England during his father's abſence, was yet but a boy, incapable of commanding an army; but the victories on the continent even ſeemed to inſpire women with ardour. Philippa, Edward's queen, took upon her to repulſe the enemy, in perſon: to that end, heading the troops drawn together from all parts, with wonderful expedition, ſhe marched directly againſt the Scots, and offered them battle. The Scotch king was no leſs imgatient to engage; he imagined a victory would be eaſy againſt undiſciplined troops, and headed by a woman: but he was miſerably deceived; he had not only the mortification to loſe the day, but to be made a priſoner by the hands of the Engliſh.

Theſe conqueſts abroad were, however, no way favourable to the cauſe of liberty at home. As the king

king became victorious, he neceſſarily increaſed in independence. The barons, clergy, and people, balanced each other's power; the royal power alone was growing beyond its bounds. Yet Edward was too ſenſible a monarch to give open diſguſt; he was only laying a foundation of deſpotiſm for his ſucceſſor to build upon; and, had he been of equal capacity with his father, he might have ſeized upon public liberty with impunity. But I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of a letter, without coming to the concluſion of this prince's reign; I muſt therefore refer you to my next.

LETTER XIX.

WE have already ſeen how unjuſtly the people diſtributed titles to kings, before they have deſerved them: we have ſeen the ſecond Edward called the father of his country, in the beginning of his reign; and yet fall, in the end, a miſerable ſacrifice to its reſentment; we have ſeen Philip of Valois, ſurnamed the Fortune, upon coming to the crown, ſuffering the moſt ſignal defeats, ſome time after.

John ſucceeded Philip in the throne of France, but had his pretenſions conteſted by Edward the Black Prince, who commanded the army of his father. This young prince's gallantry, bravery, and modeſty, had won the affections of his ſoldiers, and he almoſt became invincible at their head. John, in the mean time, was at the head of a divided and factious nobility; the government of France being under this John, exactly what

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that of England had been under a prince of the ſame name ſome reigns before. They had their parliaments of barons, deſpotic over their own hereditary poſſeſſions; and they obliged John of France to ſign a charter, very much reſembling the Magna Charta, which had been ſigned by the Engliſh monarch. The warlike reſources of France and England were, therefore, at this time very unequal. John was at the head of a nobility which acknowledged no ſubordination amongſt each other: they led their dependent ſlaves to the fight, and obeyed ſuperior command only as it ſuited their inclination: their king might more juſtly be ſaid to command a number of ſmall armies under diſtinct leaders, than one vaſt machine operating with uniformity and united force. The French barons paid their own ſoldiers, puniſhed their tranſgreſſions, and rewarded their fidelity. But very different were the forces of England: the main body of the Engliſh army was compoſed of the people, indiſcriminately levied, paid by the king, and regarding him as the ſource of preferment or diſgrace. Inſtead of perſonal attendance, the nobility contributed ſupplies in money; and there was only ſuch a number of nobles in the army, as might keep the ſpirit of honour alive, without diminiſhing military ſubordination.

With an army thus compoſed, the Black Prince advanced to Poictiers, and ravaged a country that once belonged to his anceſtors. King John, at the head of ſixty thouſand men, came up to give him battle. The Engliſh army was in ſuch a ſituation, that he might readily have ſtarved it into any terms he thought proper; but he was impatient of ſuch a delay. Both generals committed unpar-

donable

donable faults; the one in being led thus into a defile, the other in not taking a proper advantage of the ſituation. But at this age, we muſt not expect Cæſars or Hannibals to conduct armies; ignorant generals were oppoſed by generals ſtill more ignorant. The battle of Poictiers, which ſoon followed, very much reſembled that of Creſſy: the ſuperior diſcipline of the Engliſh army came off victorious; the flower of the French were cut off, and the king, being wounded in the face, was taken priſoner. A particular worth nothing is, that he ſurrendered himſelf to one of his own ſubjects, whom he had formerly baniſhed, and who now fought for his enemies. Of four ſons the king of France had with him, the three eldeſt quickly fled, and, by their cowardice, contributed to the defeat of the army: his fourth and youngeſt ſon, as yet but thirteen years old ſtill fought by his father, ſtuck near him in all the viciſſitudes of the field, and at length, was taken priſoner by his ſide. This is a remarkable inſtance of the education princes then gave their children.

This victory was in a great meaſure owing to the valour of the Black Prince; but his modeſty, after conqueſt, was ſtill more remarkable. In the moſt humble manner he remonſtrated with his royal captive, who was complaining of his misfortunes, that ſtill he had the comfort left to reflect, that though he loſt the victory, yet his courage deſerved it, and that a ſubmiſſive difference to his perſon ſhould never be wanting to make him forget his captivity. In April following the prince arrived in England, bringing his priſoner with him, entering into London in a remarkable manner: the prince, upon the left, rode a little black horſe, while

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the royal priſoner was mounted on a ſtately white charger, remarkable for its furniture and beauty.

Two kings, priſoners in the ſame court, at the ſame time, were conſidered as glorious conqueſts; but all that England gained by them was only glory. Whatever was acquired in France with all the ſplendors of triumph, was ſucceſſively, and, in a manner, ſilently loſt, without even the mortification of a defeat. The treaties that were made with the captive kings, as may be eaſily imagined, were highly to the advantage of the conquerors; but thoſe treaties were no longer obſerved, than while the Engliſh had it in their power to enforce obedience. It is true, John held to his engagements as far as was in his power; but by being a priſoner he loſt his authority, and his misfortunes rendered him contemptible. Upon his return from captivity, he not only found himſelf without finances, but at the head of an exhauſted ſtate, ſoldiers without diſcipline, and peaſants without law. One of the chiefs of the banditti, upon this occaſion, aſſumed the title of *The Friend of God, and the Enemy of Mankind.* A citizen of Sens, called John of Grouge, alſo got himſelf, by means of robberies, to be acknowledged king, and cauſed as many calamities by his devaſtations, as the real king had cauſed by his misfortunes. Such was the ſtate of France upon the arrival of John from England; yet ſuch was the abſurdity of this monarch, that he immediately prepared for a cruſade into the Holy Land, before he was ſcarce replaced on his throne. Had his exhauſted ſubjects been able to furniſh him out for his chimerical project, it is probable he would have gone through with it, but their miſeries were ſuch, as to be even incapable of paying his ranſom; upon which he again

returned

returned to England, where he died in leſs than a year. It is ſaid his paſſion for the counteſs of Saliſbury was the real cauſe of this journey; and, indeed, his age, he being near ſixty, when men too often indulge this preposterous paſſion, and the gallantry of the times, ſeems to countenance this opinion.

If England, during theſe ſhining revolutions, gained any real advantage, it was only that of having a ſpirit of elegance and honour now diffuſed through every rank of people. The meaneſt ſoldier now began to follow his leader from love, and not compulſion; he was brave from ſentiment alone, and had the honour of his country beating at his heart, even though in the humbleſt ſtation. This was the time when chivalry was at the higheſt, and all the ſucceſſes of England, at this period, were owing to a concurrence of circumſtances not much regarded by hiſtorians: *A romantic nation was led on by a romantic king.*

The ſpirit of chivalry, in ſome meaſure, ſerved to ſoften the ferocity of the age; it was a mixture of love, generoſity, and war. You have already ſeen that the ſons of princes and the nobility, inſtead of being bred to arts, or poliſhed by the ſciences, were brought into the field at an early age, and inſtructed in no other arts but thoſe of arms.

This inſtruction conſiſted in little more than merely how to ſit on horſeback, to wield the lance, to run at the ring, to flouriſh at a tournament, to fall at the feet of a miſtreſs, and attain ſuch accompliſhments as inured their bodies to bear the fatigues of a campaign. The rules of tactics, of incampments, of ſtratagems, of fortifications, were but little minded by any.

Charles

Charles the Wiſe, of France, ſoon therefore, by a finely conducted policy, regained whatever was loſt by John, his predeceſſor. Edward the Black Prince, emaciated by a lingering conſumption, died at the palace of Weſtminſter, in the forty-ſixth year of his age. England began to wear a face of diſcontent: the public treaſure was laviſhed without any advantage to the kingdom; the ſubjects laboured under numberleſs grievances; in ſhort, the kingdom ſeemed now to feel, that a nation might be at once very victorious and very unhappy. But to complete their miſeries, Edward, their king, was now no longer what he was in the earlier parts of his reign: he was ſunk into unmanly indolence, and gave himſelf up to the enjoyment of looſe deſire, in the arms of a favourite concubine, called Alice Perrers. His parliament made frequent remonſtrances againſt this baſe oblivion of himſelf. The parliaments, at this time, were not, as formerly, factions ready to oppreſs public liberty, but aſſemblies of wiſe and good men, ſedulous for the common welfare, and of wiſdom equal to the rectitude of their intentions: they frequently remonſtrated againſt the king's and his miniſters conduct; they, at one time, had influence ſufficient to get his concubine removed, but he ſoon took her back, for the paſſions of age are incurable. In her company he forgot all the burdens, duties, and fatigues of ſtate, and left the kingdom to be plundered by a rapacious miniſtry. He did not live to feel the conſequences of his bad conduct: he died at Shene, in Surry, deſerted by all, even by thoſe who had formerly grown rich by his bounty. Richard II. ſon of the Black Prince, was appointed his ſucceſſor, and came to govern a dif-

a diſcontented people, a rapacious miniſtry, and an impoveriſhed ſtate. Theſe were the calamities conſequent upon the errors of the preceding reign. Edward III. eſcaped them, but they fell heavily upon Richard, his ſucceſſor.

LETTER XX.

THE faults of conquerors, as I have already obſerved, generally fall upon their ſucceſſors. Richard II. came to the throne of his *A. D.* 1377. grandfather, when yet but eleven, and found the people diſcontented and poor. The gentry were, in fact, luxurious; a ſpirit of profuſion had entered with the ſpirit of gallantry: this neceſſarily produced indolence and rapacity among the higher orders of the kingdom, and their wants muſt neceſſarily produce an oppreſſion of the reſt.

The regents, however, appointed during the king's minority, ſeemed no way ſolicitous to appeaſe theſe murmurings. The duke of Lancaſter, better known by the name of John of Ghaunt, in the very beginning, diſguſted the people, by robbing two knights of a priſoner, which they had taken in war; and, at the ſame time, ſeveral expeditions againſt the French and Scots happened to be carried on without ſucceſs. But a new engagement entered into by the crown, of aſſiſting Portugal, at a time when the government was inſulted by nearer enemies, raiſed the people's indignation. To ſupport this unneceſſary alliance, a ſubſidy was to be levied by a poll-tax, payable by all above the age of fifteen: this,

this, at laſt, raiſed the people's reſentment into an inſurrection.

Notwithſtanding the numbers who by war, by a reſidence in towns, and by other means, had become free, yet there were ſtill multitudes in the country who had lands in villanage, that, as yet, were only ſlaves to the lords from whom they held. Theſe men had ſeen the charms of liberty, from its effects upon others; and they panted for freedom themſelves. The luxury and opulence which they ſaw others enjoy, but for which they toiled, became an incentive to them to ſtruggle for liberty alſo. Several of theſe had become opulent enough to purchaſe their freedom, but, by an unjuſt act of parliament, thoſe purchaſes were declared of no validity. This the peaſants conſidered as an infraction of the laws of humanity; and ſuch indeed it actually was. A parliament of lords, and rich commoners, in this inſtance, ſeemed to have no regard for the rights of men whom they conſidered as ſlaves, as if ſome orders of mankind were held even too vile to find juſtice. The minds of the people were, therefore, thus prepared for ſedition, when the manner of collecting the poll-tax provoked them to open revolt.

We have in preceding reigns, perceived popular inſurrections only in the towns; we now find the ſpirit of ſeditious liberty ſpreading into the country. Citizens at firſt began to perceive their own ſtrength, and next the ſame manner of thinking is embraced by the peaſant, whom the ſeverity of the laws had annexed to the ſoil. We now begin to find a knowledge of the rights of humanity diffuſed even to the very loweſt of the people, and exerting itſelf in rude and terrible efforts for freedom.

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The preſent inſurrection began in Eſſex, where a report was induſtriouſly ſpread, implying that the peaſants were doomed to death; that their houſes would be burned, and their farms plundered. The country people, alarmed at this intelligence, roſe in their own defence, and, their numbers continually increaſing, they advanced near London, to the number of an hundred thouſand, with banners diſplayed. At the head of this undiſciplined concourſe was one Walter, by trade a tyler. He was one of thoſe hardy ſpirits ſo frequently found among the common Engliſh, ready to face any danger and ſupport every calamity. In exacting the poll-tax he had refuſed to pay for his daughter, alledging that ſhe was under the age mentioned in the act of parliament. The brutal collector inſiſted upon her being a full-grown woman, and, in order to aſcertain his aſſertions, proceeded to acts of indecency: this provoked the father to ſuch a degree, that he ſtruck him dead at one blow with his hammer. Wat Tyler was therefore conſidered as a champion in the cauſe, and appointed ſpokeſman to the people. It is eaſy to imagine the diſorders committed by ſuch a tumultuous aſſembly; they burned and pillaged wherever they came, and revenged their former miſeries upon their maſters, the gentry, to whom they no longer acknowledged ſubjection. After having entered the Tower, and murdered ſuch as they regarded as enemies, they divided themſelves in bodies, and took up their quarters in different parts of the environs of the city. At length, Richard, riding towards Smithfield, invited them to a conference, in order to know and remove their grievances. Wat Tyler juſt entered Smithfield, when the king's knight delivered the royal meſſage, without alighting, not

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imagining he ſhould ſtand upon ceremony: but this haughty demagogue, whoſe pride began to riſe with his exaltation, was ſo offended at this want of reſpect, that he was going to kill him, if the king, who was himſelf advancing, had not ordered him to diſmount. In Wat Tyler's conference with the king, being both on horſeback, he made ſeveral propoſals, which, though cenſured by hiſtorians as extravagant, in reality breathe nothing but common juſtice. He deſired that all ſlaves ſhould be ſet free, and that all commonages ſhould be open to the poor as well as the rich. While he made theſe demands, he now and then lifted up his ſword in a menacing manner; which inſolence ſo raiſed the indignation of William Walworth, mayor of London, who attended the king, that, without conſidering to what danger he expoſed his maſter, he ſtunned Tyler with a blow of his mace, and Sir Philpot, riding up, thruſt his ſword through his body. His followers, ſeeing their leader on the ground, encouraged each other to revenge his death, and their bows were now bent for execution, when Richard, though not quite ſixteen years of age, inſtead of flying, rode up to the rebels, with admirable conſtancy and preſence of mind, crying out with a reſolute voice, *What, my lieges, will you then kill your king? Be not concerned for the loſs of your leader; I myſelf will now be your general: follow me into the field, and you ſhall have whatever you deſire.*

The rebels immediately deſiſted; they followed the king, as if mechanically; and the next day received a charter of freedom, and a general pardon. But theſe were only extorted grants; they were ſoon retracted; the ringleaders of the rebel-

lion were tried, convicted of treaſon, and executed without mercy. The inſurrections of the barons againſt their king, hiſtorians talk of with no great degree of animoſity; the inſurrections of the plebeians againſt the barons, in the preſent caſe, is branded with all the virulence of reproach. The puniſhment of the inſurgent barons is generally ſtiled cruelty; the puniſhment of men who fought for native freedom is called juſtice; but we muſt be contented with ſuch miſrepreſentations of facts, till philoſophers can be found to write hiſtory.

We now ſee the firſt wrong ſtep in Richard's conduct. He granted the rebels a charter, by which he gave the ſanction of juſtice to their claim; but ſoon revoked this charter, which was apparently denying that juſtice they demanded. By theſe means he diſſipated, indeed, the combination for that time; but their hatred remained, and was propagated by the ſeverity of puniſhment.

By this means Richard had effectually alienated the affections of the lower orders of people; it now only remained to make the parliament his enemies. Being come to his ſeventeenth year, he began more plainly to diſcover his inclinations, which had hitherto been reſtrained by the authority of his governors. He had been bred up amidſt flatterers, who never ventured to controul his will; he had ſeen the liberties taken by Edward III. over his ſubjects, and he fancied he might imitate him in them But Richard was not the conqueror of France and Scotland; he was hated by the poor, and envied by three guardians of great power, who ſecretly deſired his crown: every error, therefore, in the conduct of a king ſo ſituated, muſt be attended with dangerous and violent effects. His indolence in repreſſing the invaſion of the Scots, and the machinations

machinations of France, were ſufficient to give diſguſt to his conduct. All his faults were exaggerated, and his behaviour, even when right, publicly reproved. Unaccuſtomed to controul, he laid a ſcheme of becoming abſolute, and governing without his parliament's aſſiſtance or advice. Willing, however, to colour his arbitrary proceeding with the appearance of juſtice, he aſked the opinion of the judges: their opinions have been too often found to be influenced by intereſt; they gave it as their opinion, that the king was above law. Yet, perhaps, they might have been directed by ancient laws; but cuſtom had introduced new modes of thinking, and they did not pay a juſt deference to her power. This ſentence the lords oppoſed by declarations; and, offering various reaſons, were quickly at the head of forty thouſand men to ſecond their arguments: but, what had ſtill greater weight, they threatened to chuſe a new king, which ſo operated upon the king's natural puſillanimity, that he conſented to change his favourite miniſters, who had adviſed him to extend the royal prerogative: he renewed his coronation oath, and the ſame formalities were uſed as at the commencement of a new reign.

We have ſeen numberleſs of theſe inſurrections without any apparent conſequence; the king circumſcribed in one reign, and permitted to range at liberty in another: the only ſecret, at that time, for a king to become deſpotic, was to be ever in the field; a warlike prince might command the nobility, as they were obliged to follow him in his campaigns; and he might command the people, from that fondneſs which the vulgar have for a conqueror. Richard, however, was no way warlike; but, being bred up in the luxury and pride

of a court, ſtill expected deference and obedience, which could, at that time, be obtained only by merit in war.

Having, by the removal of his favourites, rendered himſelf ſtill more feeble than before, he now ran into profuſion, and endeavouring to forget his real weakneſs in extravagance and luxury. Such expences neceſſarily created new demands upon the people, and they were bold enough to refuſe: this neceſſarily produced new inſurrections, and reiterated puniſhments on the part of the king. Puniſhment and arbitrary proceeding generally produce but a temporary and fatal ſecurity; Richard, however, inſenſible of this, imagined that now was the time to render himſelf deſpotic, and had even influence ſufficient to prevail upon a parliament, called in the year 1397, to juſtify his pretenſions. By this mercileſs ſeſſion ſeveral of the nobility loſt their lives; the archbiſhop of Canterbury was baniſhed, the earl of Arundel put to death, and the earl of Warwick ſentenced to quit the kingdom.

Every thing ſeemed to contribute to ſupport the king in the acquiſition of his new-created power. The moſt forward to oppoſe his deſigns had ſuffered death or baniſhment; and they who ſtill remained, were bribed to acquieſce, by penſions, grants, and places. The great officers of the crown, the governors of the towns and counties, were all devoted to his intereſt: yet all this was but a deceitful ſecurity; this was a power founded upon intereſt or terror alone, and not upon affection; the people hated him, and the generality of the nobles only obeyed him through conſtraint.

In this manner did this giddy monarch ſuffer himſelf to be deluded by vain hopes, and every day gave ſome new inſtance of ſtraining the royal prerogative beyond what it could bear; but ſoon an opportunity offered to induce the people to refuſe a blind obedience to his unjuſt commands, and to convince him of his former errors. A charge happening to be exhibited by the duke of Hereford againſt the duke of Norfolk, for having ſpoken ſeditious words againſt his majeſty, in a private converſation; for want of ſufficient proof to ſupport the accuſation, it was decreed by the lords in parliament, that the diſpute ſhould be decided by ſingle combat, according to the laws of chivalry, ſtill in faſhion. The time and the place were appointed for ~~the~~ determining this affair, and the combatants met accordingly. It may not be amiſs to deſcribe the ceremonies upon that occaſion.

Hereford the challenger, firſt appeared, on a white courſer, gaily capariſoned, armed at all points, with his drawn ſword in his hand. When he approached the liſts, the mareſchal demanded, who he was? To which he anſwered, "I am Henry "of Lancaſter, duke of Hereford, come hither, "according to my duty, againſt Thomas Mow-"bray, duke of Norfolk, a falſe traitor to God, "the king, the realm, and me." Then, taking the oath that his quarrel was juſt and true, he deſired to enter the liſts; which being granted, he ſheathed his ſword, pulled down his beaver, croſſed himſelf on the forehead, ſeized his lance, paſſed the barrier, alighted and ſat down in a chair of green velvet, placed at one end of the liſts. He had ſcarce taken his ſeat when the king came into the field, with great pomp, attended by the peers, the count of St. Pol, who came from France

on purpoſe to ſee this famous trial; and ten thouſand men at arms to prevent tumults and diſturbance. His majeſty, being ſeated in his chair of ſtate, the king at arms proclaimed, that none but ſuch as were appointed to marſhal the field, ſhould preſume to touch the liſts, upon pain of death. Then another herald proclaimed aloud, "Behold "here Henry of Lancaſter, duke of Hereford, "who has entered the liſts, to perform his devoir "againſt Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, "on pain of being counted falſe and recreant." The duke of Norfolk immediately appeared in arms, mounted upon a barbed horſe, with a coat of arms of crimſon velvet, embroidered with lions of ſilver and mulburry-trees; and, having taken his oath before the conſtable and mareſchal, entered the field, exclaiming aloud, "God defend the "right!" Alighting from his horſe, he placed himſelf in a chair of crimſon velvet, oppoſite to his antagoniſt, at the other end of the liſts: then the mareſchal, having meaſured their lances, delivered one to the challenger, and ſent a knight with the other to the duke of Norfolk, and proclamation was made that they ſhould prepare for the combat. They immediately mounted their horſes, then cloſed their beavers, fixed their lances on the reſts; and, the trumpets ſounding a charge, the duke of Hereford began his career with great violence, but, before he could join his antagoniſt, the king threw down his warder, and the heralds interpoſed. Richard ordered their lances to be taken away, and baniſhed the duke of Hereford for ten years, and the duke of Norfolk for life. Nothing could be a ſtronger proof of that unaccountable error which ever attended this king's deſigns, than this behaviour: the one was condemned

demned to exile without being charged with any offence, and the other without being convicted of any crime. The whole kingdom was diſpleaſed at the diſappointment; and this determination, in theſe ferocious times, even ſeemed to argue cowardice in the king. The duke of Norfolk was overwhelmed with grief and deſpondence at the judgment awarded againſt him: he retired to Venice, where, in a little time, he died of ſorrow and chagrin. Hereford, on the contrary, bore his fate with great reſignation, and behaved with ſuch reſpectful ſubmiſſion, when he went to take his leave, that the king remitted four years of his exile. From this he withdrew to Paris, where he met with a favourable reception from the French king, and, in all probability, would have married the only daughter of the duke of Berry, had not the match been interrupted by the interpoſition of Richard, who ſent the earl of Saliſbury, as his ambaſſador, to repreſent Hereford as a perſon who had been guilty of treaſonable practices, and to aſſure the French court, that he would never be permitted to return to his own country. The princes of the blood, alarmed at this declaration, broke off the match abruptly; and, when Hereford expoſtulated with them on the ſubject, made him acquainted with their reaſons for retracting the aſſent they had already given to his propoſal. Such complicated injuries could not fail to aggravate the reſentment of the duke againſt Richard, which he had hitherto concealed; and theſe, probably, firſt turned his thoughts upon acquiring the crown of England. No man could be better qualified for a project of this nature than the duke of Hereford: he was cool, cautious, diſcerning, and reſolute; he had diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his

courage, both at home and abroad: he was the idol of the ſoldiery, and the favourite of the people: he was immenſely rich, and, by blood or alliance, connected with all the noblemen in England. The greateſt part of the kingdom not only murmured, but loudly exclaimed againſt the ſentence of baniſhment which had been denounced againſt him, and ardently wiſhed for an opportunity of doing him juſtice.

It was not long before they were gratified in this particular. His father, the duke of Lancaſter, dying in February, the baniſhed duke of Hereford ought to have ſucceeded to his titles and eſtate, by virtue of his hereditary right, as well as of the letters patent which he had obtained, even after his ſentence, at Coventry; but Richard, notwithſtanding his former grants, allured by the greatneſs of the prize, by a ſentence no leſs unjuſt than avaricious, ſeized the deceaſed duke's effects and eſtate, and decreed that the ſon's baniſhment ſhould be perpetual. The laws and liberties of the people were now in a moſt deplorable ſtate: there was ſcarce a man in the kingdom able, though all were willing, to oppoſe the arbitrary power uſurped by the king. Finding himſelf above all reſtraint, he gave himſelf up to a ſoft and effeminate life, regardleſs of the good of the public. His miniſters, not to be behind their monarch, gave little attention to buſineſs, but ſaw, without any concern, the Engliſh nation fall into the utmoſt contempt. In this ſituation the people naturally turned their eyes upon the baniſhed duke, as the only perſon from whom they could expect redreſs: he was ſtimulated by private injuries, and had alliance and intereſt to give weight to his meaſures. The malecontents only

only waited for the abſence of the king, to put theſe meaſures into execution.

For this an occaſion ſoon offered. The earl of Marche, preſumptive heir of the crown, having been appointed the king's lieutenant in Ireland, was ſlain, in a ſkirmiſh, by the native Iriſh; and Richard was ſo incenſed at this, that, with a numerous army, he went over to revenge his death in perſon. The duke of Lancaſter, (for this was the title which the duke of Hereford aſſumed after his father's death) being informed of Richard's departure from England, with three ſmall veſſels, landed at Ravenſpur, in Yorkſhire, at firſt only pretending that his ſole aim was to obtain juſtice. The earl of Northumberland, who had long been a malecontent, and Henry Percy, his ſon, ſurnamed Hotſpur, immediately joined him with ſome troops: after this junction, the concourſe of people coming to liſt under his banner was ſo great, that, in a few days, his army was threeſcore thouſand ſtrong: ſo eager were the nobles and people to put themſelves under the protection of a prince who allured them with the proſpect of freedom.

Whilſt theſe things were tranſacting in England, Richard was in Ireland in perfect ſecurity: the contrary winds, which continued to blow, above three weeks, hindered his receiving any news of the rebellion in his native dominions; but, when he heard of it, he immediately impriſoned the duke of Lancaſter's brothers, whom he had taken over with him, and reſolved to go immediately into England, to fight the enemy: yet, ever wavering in his reſolutions, he was perſuaded to ſtay ſome time longer, till he could prepare ſhips to tranſport all his forces at once. This delay completed his ruin: his friends in England had

aſſembled an army of forty thouſand men, who, upon finding the king did not return to head them at the time appointed, diſperſed. Richard, however, landed in England, and ſoon perceived his unhappy ſituation: he ſaw himſelf in the midſt of an enraged people, none of whom he could rely on; forſaken by thoſe who, in the ſun-ſhire of power, contributed to fan his follies. Thus, not knowing whom to truſt, or where to turn, he ſaw no other hopes of ſafety, but to throw himſelf on the generoſity of his enemy: he therefore ſent him word, that he was ready to ſubmit to whatever terms he thought proper to preſcribe, and that he earneſtly deſired a conference. For this purpoſe the duke of Lancaſter appointed a caſtle within about ten miles of Cheſter, where he came, next day, with his whole army. Richard, who the day before had been brought hither alone, deſcrying his rival's approach from the walls, went down to receive him; while the duke, after ſome ceremony, entered the caſtle in complete armour, only his head was bare in compliment to the fallen king. The king, approaching, received him with the ſalutation of, *Couſin of Lancaſter, you are welcome*: at which the duke, bowing three times to the ground, replied in theſe terms, *My lord the king, I am come ſooner than you appointed, becauſe, your people ſay, you have for one-and twenty years governed with rigour and indiſcretion, ſo that they are very ill ſatisfied with your conduct; but, if it pleaſe God, I will help you to govern them better for the time to come.* To this declaration, the king made no other anſwer, but, *Fair couſin, ſince it pleaſes you, it pleaſes us likewiſe.*

The king was ſoon taught to feel his wretched ſituation: he was led, triumphantly, through every

town, amidſt an infinite concourſe of people, who curſed him, and extolled the duke. Long live the good duke of Lancaſter, our deliverer! was the general cry; but, for the king, to uſe the emphatic words of the poet, *None cried God bleſs him.* After theſe repeated indignities, he was confined a cloſe priſoner in the Tower, there, if poſſible, to undergo ſtill a greater variety of ſtudied inſolence and flagrant contempt. Unhappy Richard, thus humbled, began to loſe his ſpirits with his power; nor was there any great ſhare of policy required to induce him to reſign his crown. Upon this reſignation the duke of Lancaſter founded his ſtrongeſt claim; but, willing to fortify his pretenſions with every appearance of juſtice, the parliament was ſoon induced to confirm his claims. The king was ſolemnly depoſed, and the duke of Lancaſter elected in his ſtead, by the title of Henry IV. Thus began the conteſt between the houſes of York and Lancaſter, which, for ſeveral years after, deluged the kingdom with blood; yet which contributed, in the end, to give ſtrength and conſiſtency to the conſtitution. *A. D.* 1399.

LETTER XXI.

NUMEROUS formalities are often uſed by princes only to cover impotence or impoſture. Henry the Fourth, knowing the injuſtice of his title to the crown, was at laſt determined to give his coronation all poſſible ſolemnity. A peculiar oil was uſed upon this occaſion; he affected great devotion; and every action ſhewed with how much humility he could be an uſurper.

Notwithſtanding, the validity of his title, whatever pains he took to ſecure it, was controverted by ſome, and a conſpiracy was ſoon formed to replace Richard on the throne. This was projected by ſeveral noblemen, and the particulars of the ſcheme were committed to writing, each being provided with a copy, ſigned by his confederates. Among other conſpirators, the duke of Aumerle was one; and he had been one of a conſultation, when it was reſolved, that the king ſhould be aſſaſſinated at Oxford, at a tournament; but, when that opportunity offered, he was miſſing among the number. It happened at that time, he was viſiting his father, the duke of York, and, ſitting at dinner, let fall a paper from his boſom, which his father took up and examined. The duke, finding the contents to be a conjuration againſt the king's life, flew with the utmoſt expedition to Windſor, to inform his majeſty of the plot: the ſon, gueſſing his father's intention, went by a ſhorter way, and obtained his pardon before his father's arrival, who, ſoon after coming, produced the paper with the conſpirators names. Henry, alarmed at this intelligence, uſed the moſt vigorous efforts to diſpel the riſing ſtorm.

The conſpirators had, by this time, dreſſed up one of Richard's ſervants, named Maudlin, in royal robes, giving out, that he was the depoſed king, who, having eſcaped from priſon, was come to implore the aſſiſtance of his ſubjects. Pity is a paſſion for which the Engliſh have ever been remarkable; majeſty in diſtreſs was ſufficient to excite all their loyalty and compaſſion, and they flocked in great numbers round the conſpiring leaders. Their army ſoon became conſiderable, and encamped near Cirenceſter, while the leaders

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took up their head quarters in that city: but they were ſo careleſs, or unexperienced in war, that they neglected to place proper guards at the gates and the avenues of the place. This the mayor ſoon obſerved, and, aſſembling four hundred men in the night, he ſecured the gates, ſo as to exclude the troops that were encamped without the walls, and then attacked the chiefs within. The duke of Surry and earl of Saliſbury, two of the principal conſpirators, were taken, after an obſtinate defence, and beheaded on the ſpot, by the mayor's order; while the duke of Exeter, and earl of Glouceſter, two more of the party, eſcaped over the tops of the houſes into the camp, with a view to ſtorm the town at the head of their forces: but they found the tents and baggage abandoned by the ſoldiers, who, hearing the noiſe and tumult within, had concluded that a party of the king's army had privately entered, and, from this perſuaſion, fled with the utmoſt precipitation. The two lords, perceiving it out of their power to execute their deſign, parted, the better to make their eſcape; but they had the misfortune to be taken, and, ſhortly after, loſt their heads upon the ſcaffold.

If we compare the times, which I now attempt to give you an idea of, with thoſe of king John, or thoſe of ſome reigns before him, we ſhall find a great change, with reſpect to the inſurgent barons. In the former period they made frequent inſurrections, were often taken in open rebellion, but as frequently pardoned; in the period now in view, they were ſeldom taken without ſuffering the utmoſt rigour of the law. This plainly ſhews how much the power of the barons was ſunk in the courſe of a couple of centuries. This revolu-

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tion of power is, notwithſtanding, natural and obvious: as the people began to ſhare the government with the nobles, the king was fixed upon as a third perſon, to ſecure the balance; and both were contented to make him great, from a jealouſy of each other. Noblemen were therefore now executed, not as petty monarchs, but offending ſubjects, and none but kings were conſidered as exempt from penal laws.

In all probability, the ill ſucceſs of this enterprize haſtened Richard's end. One of thoſe aſſaſſins, that are found in every court, ready to commit the moſt horrid crimes for reward, came down to the place of this unfortunate monarch's confinement, and, with eight other followers, ruſhed into his apartment. The king, concluding their deſign was to take away his life, reſolved to ſell it as dearly as he could: he wreſted a poll-ax from one of the murderers, and ſoon laid four of the number dead at his feet; but he was at length overpowered, and ſtruck dead by the blow of a battle-ax. Thus died the unfortunate Richard, in the thirty-third year of his age, while compaſſion for his ſufferings and death made more converts to his family and cauſe, than ever his moſt meritorious actions during life had gained him.

The death of Richard was very ſeaſonable to his ſucceſſor. The king of France had actually raiſed a vaſt armament, in order to replace the depoſed monarch; and ſo much was Henry terrified at his intentions, that he ordered the biſhop of Arundel to arm even the eccleſiaſtics of his province. The preparations of France might have contributed to haſten the fall of Richard; his death was no ſooner known at the French court, than

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all thoughts of the invaſion were laid aſide, a truce for eight-and-twenty years was concluded between the two crowns, and it was agreed that queen Iſabel, who had been married to Richard, but whoſe marriage had never been conſummated, ſhould return to France her native country.

A kingdom, like England, at that time divided in itſelf, and ſurrounded by enemies on every ſide, could not expect a peace of any continuance: accordingly the Scots began to give new diſturbances; and, when the armies of England were marched northward, in order to oppoſe their invaſions, the Welſh roſe to vindicate their ancient liberties. Owen Glendour, a name among the people of that country reſpected even to this day, led them on, and gained ſeveral victories; but his ſucceſſes were only calculated to procure a temporary triumph, and no laſting advantage. Whatever honour the Engliſh loſt on the ſide of Wales, they gained on that of Scotland. The hiſtories of thoſe times are filled with the petty victories and defeats on either ſide; but, as they neither ſerved to alter nor transfer power, they ſcarce deſerve a place in the chronicles of a kingdom.

While Henry was employed in thoſe unavailing campaigns, a more dangerous ſtorm threatened him from his own ſubjects. He claimed the priſoners that were taken from the Scots by the earl of Northumberland, for himſelf; while the earl, flaſhed with victory, and conſidering himſelf as the ſupporting column of Henry's throne, reſented his demand. A ſcheme was laid, in which the Scots and Welſh were to combine their forces, and aſſiſt Northumberland in elevating Mortimer, as the true heir to the Engliſh throne. As ſoon, therefore, as the confederates were prepared, the

Percies

Percies of Northumberland ſuddenly appeared in arms in the North; but the earl himſelf falling ill, his brother and ſon marched with his troops to join the Welſh, who were advanced as far as Shropſhire. Upon the junction of theſe two armies, they publiſhed a manifeſto, which complained of many real grievances, and aggravated others. Henry, who had received no intelligence of their deſigns, was extremely ſurpriſed at the news of this rebellion; but, fortunately, having an army in readineſs, he marched towards Shrewſbury to meet the rebels, who were there encamped. Upon coming up to them, propoſals for a mediation were offered, and ſuch favourable terms promiſed, that it was thought it would end in a reconciliation; but diſtruſt on both ſides ſoon broke off the treaty, and the battle ſoon began. In this Henry obtained a complete victory; and Hotſpur, the earl of Northumberland's ſon, ſo renowned for former ſucceſſes, was ſlain. Mean time the earl of Northumberland, being recovered, was advancing with a body of troops to reinforce the army of the malecontents, and take upon him the command; but, hearing by the way of his ſon's and brother's misfortune, he diſmiſſed his troops, not daring to keep the field with ſo few forces before a victorious army. The king, to terminate this troubleſome affair as ſoon as poſſible, promiſed the earl an abſolute pardon, in caſe he obeyed without delay, menacing him with utter ruin, ſhould he refuſe the proffered favour. The earl, finding himſelf without reſource, choſe rather to throw himſelf upon the king's mercy, than lead a precarious and indigent life in exile; he therefore repaired to York, and threw himſelf at the king's feet, who punctually performed his promiſe. Probably, he thought

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the criminal was already ſufficiently puniſhed in the death of his ſon and brother.

The extinction of one rebellion only ſeemed to give riſe to new. The archbiſhop of York, being diſſatisfied, and eager to revenge the kings's death, by whom he was promoted, entered into a confederacy, with ſome other lords, to dethrone Henry. Northumberland, though pardoned, was again among the number: they were, however, once more prematurely diſcovered, and moſt of the conſpirators died by the hands of the executioner; but Northumberland had the good fortune to eſcape into Scotland.

While the kingdom was thus torn by faction, and threatened with foreign invaſions, a ſtill more terrible calamity thereatened it from the clergy. Since Wickliffe publiſhed his opinions, about the end of the reign of Edward III. his doctrine was ſo ſpread, that the clergy were in continual apprehenſions of its prevailing. Henry was now to catch at every aſſiſtance, in order to ſtrengthen his uſurped power: among others, that of the clergy was not to be deſpiſed; he therefore earneſtly recommended to his parliament the care of the church's conſervation. How reluctant ſoever the houſe of commons might be to perſecute a ſect whoſe only crime was error, the credit of the court, and the cabals of the clergy, obtained, at length, an act for the burning obſtinate heretics. This ſtatute was no ſooner paſſed, than William Sawfre, a follower of Wickliffe, was burned alive, by virtue of the king's writ, delivered to the mayor of London. This was the firſt man in England who ſuffered death for the ſake of religion; but, the fires once kindled, the clergy would not ſuffer

ſuffer them ſoon to be extinguiſhed: they readily perceived, that a power of burning their enemies would revive that temporal power which they poſſeſſed about three centuries before: in this they were not miſtaken; they again, by theſe means, renewed their priſtine authority, but with this difference, that as, in the times of the Saxon heptarchy, their power was founded in the love of the people, in the preſent caſe, it had its original wholly in their fears.

By theſe means Henry ſurmounted all his troubles, and the kingdom enjoyed tranquillity. He had nothing to fear from France, diſtracted by its own inteſtine diviſions; the Welſh ſued for peace; the regent of Scotland dreaded a rupture with England, leſt Henry ſhould ſend home the king of Scotland, whom he had made his priſoner, and thus terminate the regent's delegated power: add to this, the malecontents in England were too inconſiderable to attempt any thing further againſt the government. During this calm, the king endeavoured to efface the impreſſions of ſeverity, which his conduct had made upon the people, by affecting a popularity and regard for the welfare of the ſubject; a never failing method to conciliate the affection of the Engliſh in favour of their ſovereign. While he thus laboured, not without ſucceſs, to retrieve the reputation he had loſt, his ſon, the prince of Wales, ſeemed bent upon incurring public averſion: he gave a looſe to all kinds of debauchery, and was ſurrounded by a crew of profligate wretches, who made a practice of committing the moſt illegal acts of violence. The father was extremely mortified at this degeneracy in his eldeſt ſon, who had already exhibited repeated proofs of his valour, conduct, and generoſity; virtues which he now ſeemed

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to renounce; while the ſplenetic and gloomy trembled at the proſpect of his ſucceeding to the throne. Nevertheleſs, in the midſt of theſe exceſſes, the nobleneſs of his heart ſeemed, at intervals, to emerge from the gulph in which it was plunged. One of his diſſolute companions, having been brought to trial for ſome miſdemeanor, was condemned, notwithſtanding all the intereſt he could make in his favour; and he was ſo exaſperated at the iſſue of the trial, that he ſtruck the judge upon the bench. This magiſtrate, whoſe name was Sir William Gaſcoigne, behaved with the dignity that became his office; he forthwith ordered the prince to be committed to priſon. When this tranſaction was reported to the king, who was an excellent judge of mankind, he could not help exclaiming, in a tranſport of joy, Happy is the king who has a magiſtrate endowed with courage to execute the laws upon ſuch an offender; ſtill more happy in having a ſon willing to ſubmit to ſuch chaſtiſement.

This, in fact, is one of the firſt great inſtances we read in the Engliſh hiſtory, of a magiſtrate doing juſtice in oppoſition to power. The government was now much changed from what it was in the times even of Richard, when judges were but the miniſters of royal caprice.

Henry did not long out-live this tranſaction. Perceiving his end approach, he diſpoſed his mind to the duties of devotion, and took the croſs, fully determined to conſecrate the remaining part of his life in fighting the cauſe of the pilgrims to Jeruſalem, which was at that time conſidered as the cauſe of heaven. This is not the firſt inſtance we have ſeen of princes endeavouring to ſtrike up a bargain with Providence, and promiſing to perform particular

particular acts of devotion, upon being indulged with a longer period of exiſtence. He imparted his deſign to a great council, aſſembled for that purpoſe; and began to make preparations for the expedition, when his diſorder increaſed to ſuch a degree, that he was obliged to lay aſide his intention, and think of a voyage of greater importance. As his conſtitution decayed, his fears of loſing the crown redoubled, even to childiſh anxiety; he would not ſleep without the royal diadem was laid upon his pillow. One day being in a violent paroxyſm of his diſorder, the prince of Wales took up the crown and carried it away; but, ſoon after, the king recovering his ſenſes, and miſſing the crown, he aſked what was become of it, and underſtanding the prince had carried it off, "What," ſaid the king to the prince, with marks of indignation, "would you "rob me of my dignity before my death?" "No," replied the prince: "Thinking your majeſty was "dead, I took the crown as my lawful inheritance; "but now I ſee you alive, I reſtore it with much "more pleaſure, and may God grant you many "happy days to enjoy it in peace!" So ſaying he replaced the crown upon the pillow; and, having received his father's bleſſing, dutifully retired. The king was ſurpriſed at his laſt fit at his devotions before the ſhrine of St. Edward the Confeſſor, in Weſtminſter-abbey, from whence he was carried to the Jeruſalem chamber. When recovered from his ſwoon, perceiving himſelf in a ſtrange place, he deſired to know if the apartment had any particular name: being told of its appellation, he now concluded a prophecy fulfilled, which ſaid, that he ſhould die in Jeruſalem; and, after ſome good inſtructions to his ſucceſſor, he recommended his

his ſoul to heaven, and ſoon after expired, on the twentieth day of March, in the forty-ſixth year of his age, and the fourteenth of his reign.

Henry, whatever he might have been as a man, was certainly an excellent king. The government aſſumed both a form and liberty under his adminiſtration; the diſtinction between the nobility and the people was rendered leſs conſiderable; and the magiſtrates were leſs arbitrary and leſs venal.

LETTER XXII.

THE death of Henry IV. gave his people but little affliction, among who hem never acquired any popularity; but *A.D.* 1413. the rejoicings made for the ſucceſſion of his ſon, Henry V. were manifeſt and ſincere. This prince was their favourite, notwithſtanding the profligacy of his youth: in the very height of riot and extravagance, he would, ſometimes, give inſtances of the ſublimeſt virtues. But his courage ſeemed to be what peculiarly won their affection and eſteem: at this barbarous period, courage ſeemed to be regarded as the only virtue: courage and ſuperſtition then made up the whole ſyſtem of human duty, and ſtamped the character of heroiſm.

The people of Europe were, by this time, degenerated from what they were even two hundred years before: a continuance of war had blotted out the very traces of morality. The vices of the clergy had drawn upon them contempt and oppoſition, which they returned, not by reforming themſelves, but by perſecuting thoſe who oppoſed them.

them. This reign was begun in attempting to extirpate the hereſy of Wickliffe. John Oldcaſtle, baron of Cobham, was the moſt conſiderable protector of this ſect; he was the king's domeſtic, and ſtood highly in his favour. The archbiſhop of Canterbury, therefore, undertook to prejudice him in the royal opinion, and endeavoured to perſuade the young monarch that fire and fagot were the only inſtruments capable of ſaving an heretic from future damnation; and that Oldcaſtle's opinions deſerved the ſevereſt puniſhments of the law. The king was, at length, perſuaded to talk with Oldcaſtle in private, and, finding him immovable, gave him up to the fury of his enemies. Perſecution ever produces thoſe crimes which it endeavours to aboliſh. Oldcaſtle was condemned, but, eſcaping, was obliged to become, in fact, that guilty perſon which they had at firſt falſely repreſented him: he headed a body of malecontents, and refuſed to be amenable to the royal power. This unhappy man, after a variety of diſtreſſes, at length fell into the power of his enemies; and never did the cruelty of man invent, or the crimes of the delinquent drawn down, more torments than he was made to endure: he was hung up with a chain by the middle, and by a ſlow fire burned, or rather roaſted alive.

Such ſpectacles as theſe muſt naturally produce a diſguſt in the people both to the government and to the clergy; but, to turn their minds from theſe hideous ſpectacles, Henry was reſolved to take advantage of the troubles in which France was, at that time, involved. Charles, who was then king of France, was ſubject to frequent fits of lunacy, which totally diſqualified him from reigning: in theſe intervals the ambition of his vaſſals

and

and courtiers had room for exertion, and they grew powerful from the weakneſs of their king. Iſabella, of Bavaria, his queen, was at the head of one faction; the duke of Burgundy of another: the faction of the children of the duke of Orleans was conſiderable; that only which held to the king was feeble. Each of theſe, as they happened to prevail, branded their captives with the names of traitors, and the gibbets were at onee hung with the bodies of the accuſed and the accuſers.

This was thought a moſt favourable opportunity to reſcue, from France, thoſe grants that had formerly been given up by treaty: Henry, therefore, invaded that kingdom with an army of fifty thouſand men. He took Harfleur, and advanced into a country already rendered deſolate by factions, and which he now totally laid waſte by a foreign invaſion: but, tho' the enemy made but a feeble reſiſtance, yet the climate ſeemed to fight for them; a contagious dyſentry carried off three parts of Henry's ſoldiers. In ſuch a ſituation he had recourſe to an expedient common enough in the barbarous times I am deſcribing; he challenged the dauphin to ſingle combat, offering to ſtake his pretenſions on the event. This challenge, as might naturally be expected, was rejected; and the French, though diſagreeing internally, now ſeemed united at the appearance of foreign danger.

Henry ſoon began to repent of his raſh inroad into a country, where diſeaſe, and a powerful army, every moment threatened diſtruction; and, therefore, thought of retiring to Calais. In this retreat, which was at once both painful and dangerous, Henry took every method to inſpire his troops with courage and perſeverance, and ſhewed

them,

them, in himself, an example of patience and resignation. In the mean time the French army was drawn up to obstruct his passage, nor was there any possibility of his passing them without a battle; yet even that could promise but small hopes of victory: his army was wasted with disease, their spirits worn down with fatigue, destitute of provisions, and but nine thousand in number, to sustain the shock of an enemy amounting to an hundred and fifty thousand. This disparity, as it raised the courage of the French, so it impressed the English with terror. So confident were the French leaders of success, that they began to treat for the ransom of their prisoners. On the 25th of October, 1415, the two armies drew up in battle array, early in the morning, near the castle of Agincourt. A narrow ground, flanked on one side by a wood, on the other by a rivulet, was to be the scene of action. The constable of France commanded the French, and Henry with Edward duke of York, the English. Both armies, for some time kept silently gazing at each other, as if afraid to begin; which Henry perceiving, with a chearful countenance, cried out, My friends, since they will not begin, let us set them the example; come on, and the Blessed Trinity be our protection! And now the whole army set forward with a shout. The French still continued to wait their approach with intrepidity, when the English archers let fly a shower of arrows, three feet long, which did great execution. The French calvalry advancing, to repel these, two hundred bowmen, who lay till then concealed, rising on a sudden, let fly among them. The English, seeing their confusion, now threw by their arrows, and fell upon them sword in hand: though enfeebled by disease, yet they recompensed the defect

by

by valour. The French at firſt repulſed the aſſailants; but they, reſolving to conquer or die, again burſt in upon the enemy, with ſuch impetuoſity that they gave way: in the mean time, a body of Engliſh horſe, which had been concealed in a neighbouring wood, ruſhing out, flanked the French infantry; and now a total diſorder began to enſue.

The firſt line of the enemy being thus routed, the ſecond line began to march up to interrupt the progreſs of victory. Henry therefore, alighting from his horſe, preſented himſelf to the enemy, with an undaunted countenance; and at the head of his men, fought on foot, encouraging ſome, and aſſiſting others. Eighteen French cavaliers, who were reſolved to kill him or die in the attempt, ruſhing forth together, advanced, and one of them ſtunned him with a blow of his battle-axe; they then fell upon him in a body, and he was juſt going to ſink under their blows, when David Gam, a valiant Welchman, and two more of the ſame country, came to his aid: they ſoon turned the attention of the French from the king; but, being overpowered themſelves, they fell dead at his feet. The king had now recovered his ſenſes, and, more help coming in, the eighteen Frenchmen were all ſlain; upon which he knighted the brave Welchmen who had bravely fallen in his defence. The heat of the battle ſtill increaſing, his courage ſeemed to increaſe; and now the thickeſt of the battle was gathered round his perſon: his brother being fallen down by his ſide, ſtunned with the blow of a club, he covered him for a while; but receiving another blow himſelf, it threw him on his knees: he ſoon, however, re-

covered, and his valour ſeemed to inſpire his troops with fury; they ran headlong upon the enemy, and, by an unexpected attack, put them into ſuch diſorder that their leaders could never after bring them to the charge. The duke of Alençon, who commanded the ſecond line, ſeeing it fly, reſolved by one deſperate ſtroke to retrieve the day, or fall in the attempt: wherefore running up to King Henry, and crying aloud that he was the duke of Alençon, he diſcharged ſuch a blow on his head, that it carried off a part of the king's helmet: Henry not having being able to ward off the blow, ſoon returned it, by ſtriking the duke to the ground; and he was ſoon killed by the ſurrounding crowd, all the king's efforts to ſave him from their fury being ineffectual.

The two firſt lines being thus diſperſed, the third refuſed to aſſiſt them, and marched off without fighting. The king, therefore, thinking himſelf thus ſure of victory, was ſurpriſed with an account that his baggage was plundering by the enemy: juſt ſtruck with an apprehenſion that the French had rallied, and being ſenſible that the number of his priſoners was greater than that of his army, he raſhly ordered all the priſoners to be put to death; which order was accordingly executed. This ſeverity tarniſhed the glory which his victory would have otherwiſe have acquired; but all the heroiſm, and all the virtues of that age, are tinctured with barbarity.

This victory, however great it may appear, was rather oſtentatious than uſeful: it acquired the Engliſh glory, but not dominion; and while it ſettled Henry's intereſt more firmly in the hearts of his ſubjects, it only ſerved to inſpire him with a love of new conqueſts. With this view, therefore, he

returned

returned to England, in order to procure new ſtores of men and money.

The war between the two kingdoms, from this period, ſeemed to be carried on rather by negociations, treaſons, plots, and fomented jealouſies, than by the force of arms. France was but as one vaſt theatre of crimes, murders, puniſhments, and devaſtations: the duke of Orleans was aſſaſſinated by the duke of Burgundy, and he, in his turn, fell by the treachery of the dauphin; while the ſon, deſiring to revenge his father's death, acknowledged Henry as lawful heir to the crown, and a treaty was concluded between Henry and the young duke of Burgundy at Troyes, by which he was acknowledged heir to the crown of France, after the death of Charles, who ſtill reigned, though, by his diſeaſes, rendered totally incapable of buſineſs. Catharine, the French king's daughter, was given to Henry in marriage; and it was reſolved, that the dauphin ſhould be brought to an account for the murder of the late duke of Burgundy. Things being adjuſted in this manner, Henry entered the city of Paris without oppoſition, and there conducted the government at his pleaſure; while the feeble Charles was attended as a king indeed, but with ſcarce even the liberty of a ſubject.

The dauphin, in the mean time, wandered about, a ſtranger in his own dominions, while Henry returned to London, to raiſe new ſubſidies and new troops, to ſecure his late conqueſts. His preſence, as might be expected, inſpired his ſubjects with joy; but they, at the ſame time, could not be much pleaſed with a conqueſt, which ſeemed likely to transfer the ſeat of empire from among them. The parliament, upon various pretences,

refuſed him a ſupply equal to his demands: however, he again ſet ſail with a new-raiſed army, and the dauphin, upon his appearance, thought fit again to retire. Henry then entered Paris, and while Charles had but a ſmall court, he was attended with a very magnificent one. On Whitſunday they dined together in public, the two kings and the two queens with their crowns on their heads; Charles, indeed, receiving apparent homage, but Henry commanding with abſolute authority. After this he prepared to ſtop the progreſs of the enemy, who had already taken ſome towns; but whilſt he flattered himſelf with a ſpeedy victory, he was attacked with a fiſtula, which the phyſicians were at that time too unſkilful to treat with judgment. He died at the caſtle of Vincennes, with the ſame intrepidity with which he lived, and was buried at Weſtminſter-abbey. His reign, during the ſhort time he lived, which was but thirty-four years was rather ſplendid than ſerviceable; the treaſures of his native country were laviſhed upon conqueſts that to them were unprofitable. His military fame acquired him the reputation of every other good quality; he favoured the clergy, and they have returned the debt to his memory. In general, the good or the erroneous conduct of a prince, appears rather after his death than during his life-time; and the ſucceſſors of imprudent kings are often taxed with errors not their own, as we ſhall preſently ſee. He died, however, fortunate, by falling in the midſt of his triumphs, and leaving his ſubjects with reputation. Charles, who died two months after him, finiſhed a wretched reign, long paſt in phrenzy, and with contempt, branded by all France, and leaving the moſt miſerable ſubjects upon earth.

LETTER XXIII.

OUR triumphs at this time in France produced ſcarce any good effects at home: as we grew warlike, we became brutal; and, panting after foreign poſſeſſions, we forgot the arts of cultivating thoſe that lay nearer home. Our language, inſtead of improving, was daily becoming mere barbarous: Langland and Chaucer, about a century before, ſeemed to have drawn it from obſcurity, and enriched it with new terms and combinations; but it was now relapſed into its former groſſneſs, and no poet or hiſtorian of note was born in this calamitous period.

Henry VI. ſucceſſor to Henry V. was not quite a year old when he came to the throne; *A. D.* 1422. and his relations began ſoon after, to diſpute the government during his minority. The duke of Bedford was appointed, by parliament, protector of England, defender of the church, and firſt counſellor of the king; his brother, the duke of Glouceſter, was to govern in his abſence, while he conducted the French war; but ſeveral others aſpired at this poſt as well as he. The ſecond rank in every kingdom, as being the moſt powerful, is generally the moſt envied ſituation. The firſt ſtep his enemies took to render the duke of Glouceſter odious, was to accuſe his wife, the ducheſs, of witchcraft. She was charged with converſing with one Sir Roger Bolingbroke, a prieſt, and reputed necromancer, and one Mary Gurdemain, who was ſaid to be a witch: it was aſſerted that with their aſſiſtance, ſhe made a figure of the king in wax; this the accuſers ſaid was placed before a gentle fire, and, as the wax diſſolved, the

king's ſtrength was waſted; and, upon its total diſſolution, his life was to be at an end. This charge Bolingbroke utterly denied; but the ducheſs confeſſed that ſhe had deſired the woman to make a philtre: to ſecure the affections of the duke her huſband. Neither their innocence nor her rank, could protect them: ſhe was condemned to penance and perpetual impriſonment, Bolingbroke was hanged, and the woman burnt in Smithfield.

Henry, during theſe conteſts with his miniſters, was, at firſt, from age, incapable of conducting the reigns of government; and, when he became adult, he was equally incapable from ignorance and imbecility. Whether it was that his governors had kept him in ignorance, in order to prolong their own power, or whether he was naturally weak, hiſtory does not clearly determine. The earl of Suffolk, one of thoſe who ſhared the power at that time, thought the beſt way of managing the king would be to marry him to a woman who was herſelf capable of reigning alone. He had ſtill another motive, which was to create a new power to oppoſe the duke of Glouceſter, who was his enemy, and an obſtacle in the road to his ambition: for this purpoſe, he fixed upon Margaret of Anjou, daughter of Rene, king of Sicily, and niece of the king of France. She was a princeſs of uncommon reſolution, and great penetration, but entirely without fortune; for which it was ſaid her other good qualities were ſufficient to atone. This match the duke of Glouceſter vainly oppoſed; the match went forward, and the new queen ſhewed her reſentment, by proving a formidable enemy, willing and able to undo him.

She firſt began her reign with removing him from

from the council board. To palliate this proceeding, perſons were ſuborned to accuſe him of cruelty and injuſtice: to theſe accuſations he pleaded his innocence, with ſuch force of evidence, that the council, though conſiſting of his enemies, were obliged to acquit him. Still, however, the queen, bent upon his ruin, ordered him to be apprehended, and accuſed before the parliament, ſummoned for this purpoſe. As the people thought him innocent, it was expected he would come off now as he had before; but, on the day he was to make his defence, he was found dead in his bed, though without any ſigns of violence upon his body.

This death rendered the queen and the king equally odious: the queen eſpecially was charged with the murder, and the dignity of her ſtation only ſerved to render her a more conſpicuous object of reproach. But what ſtill contributed to render the people diſcontented with the adminiſtration, was the indifferent ſucceſs of their arms in France. Triumphs and conqueſts were ever a means of repreſſing the diſcontents of the people; but the preſent government, to their quarrels at home, added to the misfortune of being defeated abroad.

Upon the death of Henry V. the dauphin of France aſſerted his claim to the throne of that kingdom under the title of Charles VII. Nothing could be more deplorable than his ſituation upon coming to the crown, of which he was only the nominal poſſeſſor: the Engliſh were maſters of almoſt all France. Henry VI. was ſolemnly inveſted with regal power, by legates from Paris. The duke of Bedford, with a numerous army

in the heart of the kingdom, confirmed his claim, and the duke of Burgundy was ſteady in the Engliſh alliance. Wherever Charles attempted to face the enemy, he was overthrown; he could ſcarcely rely on the friends next his perſon, and his authority was inſulted, even by his own ſervants. In this ſituation, nothing but miraculons aſſiſtance, or pretended miracles, could ſave him. To the laſt expedient he had recourſe, and it fully anſwered his intentions. The French, from a vanquiſhed nation, are ſuddenly going to be victorious; and the Engliſh, who had hitherto been deemed invincible, are going every where to be worſted, and, at length, totally driven out of the kingdom.

A gentleman, on the frontiers of Lorrain, whoſe name was Baudricourt, was the perſon who firſt reſolved to put this happy impoſture into practice. He fixed upon the ſervant-maid of an inn for this purpoſe, and ſhe was inſtructed at once to perform the duties of a warrior and a prophetеſs: this was Joan of Arc, the renowned maid of Orleans; a woman of maſculine ſtrength and courage, pretending to be but eighteen, but, in reality, twenty-ſeven years old. She equipped herſelf in the arms and habit of a man, and it was given out that ſhe was inſpired: ſhe was brought before the king, examined by the doctors of the univerſity, and they, either deceived, or willing to aſſiſt the impoſture, affirmed that her commiſſion was from heaven. The vulgar, as ready to give credit to inſpiration as to witchcraft, eaſily came into the impoſture, and acquired new hopes and confidence of ſucceſs.

The Engliſh were, at that time, beſieging the city of Orleans, Charles's laſt reſource, and were upon

upon the point of becoming maſters of it: Joan undertook to raiſe the ſiege; and to render herſelf the more remarkable, ordered a ſword to be brought her from the tomb of a knight buried in the church of Fierbois. She addreſſed the ſoldiers as a meſſenger from heaven, and aſſured them, that Providence would ſtrengthen their arms. She marched at their head, and delivered Orleans; routed the Engliſh wherever they oppoſed; propheſied that the king ſhould be crowned at Rheims, and ſhe herſelf aſſiſted at the ſolemnity which ſhe had foretold: ſhe was preſent at the coronation, holding in her hand the ſtandard under which ſhe had been ſo often victorious.

This chain of ſucceſſes, and the dignity which his late coronation gave the French king, now entirely turned the ſcale in his favour; the Engliſh loſt the kingdom by the ſame methods the French had loſt it before: while Charles united his forces and proceeded with diſpatch, they were quarrelling among themſelves, and loſing the ſeaſons of ſucceſs. In the midſt of the king's good fortune, however, Joan of Arc, his brave champion, was taken priſoner, as ſhe was protecting the rear of her men in a retreat. The joy of the Engliſh upon this occaſion is not to be expreſſed; and the duke of Bedford, their general, thought no method could be ſo proper to reſtore their loſt courage, as to proſecute his priſoner for witchcraft. It is a diſagreeable reflection upon human nature, that judges almoſt ever determine on the ſide of authority: ſhe was found guilty by ſeveral biſhops and doctors of the univerſity of Paris. She was at firſt condemned as a ſorcereſs and an heretic, and enjoined to live, by way of penance, upon bread and water, and to remain in priſon for life:

ſometime after, under colour of her relapſing, ſhe was publickly burnt for a witch. Superſtition adds virulence to the natural cruelty of mankind; and this cruel ſentence ſerved only to inflame the hatred between the contending powers, without mending the cauſe of the Engliſh. In vain the brave Talbot and his ſon ſtrove to maintain the declining intereſt of the Engliſh in France: in the year 1437, the French king made his triumphant entry into Paris, and, in a ſequel of thirteen years more the Engliſh were entirely baniſhed from France; they were only left in poſſeſſion of Calais and Guienne, and loſt for ever all the fruits of the victories of Creſſy, Poictiers, and Agincourt. Such is the end of ambition! the only conſequences of their conqueſts there, were to deluge that kingdom with the blood of its ſlaughtered inhabitants, and their own.

It may eaſily be ſuppoſed, that the loſſes of the Engliſh in France, and the diviſions of their rulers at home, muſt raiſe factions. In this period of calamity, a new intereſt was revived, which ſeemed to have lain dormant in the times of proſperity and triumph: the duke of York began to think of aſſerting his right to the crown of England. This nobleman was deſcended, by the mother's ſide, from Lionel, one of the ſons of Edward III. The reigning king was deſcended from John of Ghaunt, a ſon of the ſame Edward, but younger than Lionel: thus the duke of York's claim was prior to that of Henry. The enſign of the duke was a white roſe, that of Henry a red. This gave name to the two houſes, whoſe contentions were about to drench the kingdom with ſlaughter.

The duke of Suffolk and the queen were now at the head of affairs, and managed all things with unlimited

unlimited authority. As he had made his way to power by the blood of Glouceſter, he was reſolved to eſtabliſh himſelf by the uſual reſources of tyranny, by cruelty to his inferiors, and flattery to the queen. This unjuſt and ill managed power firſt drew againſt him the oppoſition of the duke of York: perhaps the cauſe of the public was the only motive for his firſt reſiſtance. Almoſt every malecontent has ſome real, and ſome fictitious cauſes of complaint: he therefore had recourſe to parliament, and accuſed the duke of Suffolk as the ſource of all the nation's diſgraces in France. This accuſation might have been falſe; but the real motive, which was Suffolk's power, and the cruel uſe he made of it, was left unmentioned, although it was true. The court, to content the people, condemned him to baniſhment, and he embarked in a little veſſel to take his paſſage to France; but he could not eſcape his deſtiny. He was met in his paſſage by an Engliſh man of war; the captain, having a mind to ſearch the ſhip the duke was in, and, finding him there, ordered his head to be ſtruck off without further delay. There is little in the tranſactions of theſe times to intereſt us on the ſide of either party: we ſee crimes on both ſides, and ſcarce a ſhining character or a virtue to animate the narrative.

By the death of the duke of Suffolk, his rival, of York, ſaw himſelf rid of a potent enemy, and found the diſcontents of the people againſt the adminiſtration daily increaſe. Among the inſurrections of theſe unhappy times, was that headed by Jack Cade, who led a tumultuous body of forces to London, to redreſs their grievances, and there beheaded the Lord Treaſurer. The government might readily perceive the diſaffection of the populace, by his

reception from the city of London, who opened their gates to him: however, upon the king's proclamation, his adherents, after a day or two, were diſperſed, and he himſelf taken and ſlain. In the mean time, the duke of York ſecretly fomented theſe diſturbances, and, pretending to eſpouſe the cauſe of the people, wrote to the king from his retreat in Wales, adviſing a reformation in the miniſtry. His letters of expoſtulation were ſoon backed by an army; he marched up to London, but found an unexpected repulſe from the city, which ſhut its gates upon him. In this dilemma he offered to diſband his army, if the duke of Somerſet, who was at that time the envied object in power, ſhould be ſent to the Tower: this requeſt was ſeemingly complied with, contrary to his expectation; and now, coming to court to accuſe him in perſon, he was ſurpriſed to ſee the duke of Somerſet, who was hid behind the hangings, ſuddenly come forth, and retorting the accuſation upon him. York now perceived his danger, and repreſſed the impetuoſity of his accuſation. As ſoon as he left the preſence, the king commanded him to be apprehended; but ſuch was the duke's authority, or ſuch the timidity of the king's council, that they ſuffered him to retire, upon promiſing ſtrict obedience for the future.

This reconciliation was only temporary: he ſtill aſpired at the crown, and, the king falling ill, by his intrigues, he had ſufficient art to be taken into the number of the privy council. This was a fatal blow to Henry's intereſts: the duke of York, now let into a ſhare of the authority, and ſecure of the affections of the people, carried all before him. The duke of Somerſet was ſent to the Tower, and the parliament declared his rival protector of the realm.

realm. This power the duke of York for ſome time enjoyed without controul; till the unhappy king, recovering from his dizzineſs, as if awaking from a dream, perceived, with ſurpriſe, that he was ſtripped of his authority. Margaret, his queen, did all in her power to rouze him to a ſenſe of his ſituation: he therefore began by depoſing the duke from his power, who inſtantly had recourſe to arms. The impotent monarch, thus obliged to take the field, was dragged after his army to the battle of St. Albans, where he was routed by the duke of York, and Somerſet, his general, was ſlain. The king, being wounded, and hiding himſelf in a cottage near the field of battle, was taken priſoner, and treated with ſeeming reſpect: from thence he was brought along, in triumph, to London; and the duke permitting him ſtill to enjoy the title of king, reſerved to himſelf that of protector, in which conſiſted all the power of the crown.

Henry was now but a priſoner, treated with the forms of royalty; yet, indolent and ſickly as he was, the title alone ſeemed ſufficient for him. At laſt, his friends induced once more to re-aſſert his prerogative, the duke of York again retired, to reſiſt the deſigns of the queen. Mutual diſtruſt once more brought their arms to the field, and the fate of the kingdom was to be decided by the ſword. On the king's ſide, the queen ſeemed the only acting general: ſhe ranged the army in battalia, gave the neceſſary orders, while the poor king was led about, from place to place, an involuntary ſpectator of thoſe martial preparations. The army on the oppoſite ſide was, in the abſence of the duke of York, commanded by the earl of Warwick, the moſt celebrated general of his age;

age; a man formed for times of trouble; extremely artful, and extremely brave; equally ſkilful in council and the field; and born to give and to take away kingdoms at pleaſure. After many battles without effect, and deſigns without conſequence, both armies, at laſt, met on a plain near Northampton: the queen's army conſiſted of five-and-twenty thouſand men, the army of Warwick of forty thouſand. Never was greater animoſity between the chiefs of an army before; both pretending to fight for the king, whoſe authority they equally attempted to deſtroy. While the queen went about from rank to rank, the king ſtaid in his tent, waiting the iſſue of the battle with female doubts and apprehenſions. Both ſides fought five hours with the utmoſt obſtinacy, but the good fortune of the earl of Warwick was ſuperior to that of the queen; ſhe was conquered, and had the misfortune to ſee the king taken priſoner in his tent. Thus Henry was once more brought back in triumph to his capital.

A parliament was now called to give a face to this ſucceſsful rebellion. The duke of York, though formerly contented with the title of protector, now claimed the crown. Our proſpects widen as we riſe. The cauſe of Henry and the duke was ſolemnly debated in the houſe of peers: each ſide produced their reaſons for or againſt the conqueror. This was the firſt time that a true ſpirit of liberty ever appeared to exert itſelf in England, and in which victory did not determine every inquiry. The duke of York, though a conqueror, could not entirely gain his cauſe: it was determined that Henry ſhould poſſeſs the throne during life, and that the duke of York ſhould be his ſucceſſor, to the utter ſecluſion of the prince of Wales.

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The queen, to all appearance, ſeemed now utterly deſtitute of every reſource; but, though ſhe had loſt all, ſhe yet retained her native perſeverance and intrepidity. She was a woman of a great mind, and ſome faults; but ambition ſeemed to be what called them into action. Being now a fugitive, diſtant from the capital, oppoſed by a victorious army, and a conſummate general, ſhe ſtill tried every reſource to repair her diſaſtrous circumſtances: ſhe flew to Wales, animated her old friends, acquired new, and raiſed an army to defend her cauſe. She, and her old enemy, the duke of York, once more met upon Wakefield Green, near the caſtle of Sandal: fortune this day turned the victory on her ſide; the duke of York was ſlain; the duke of Rutland, his ſecond ſon, fell in the flight; and the father's head, being cut off, was fixed upon the walls of York.

Margaret, being now victorious, marched towards London, in order to give the king liberty. The earl of Warwick, who now was at the head of the Yorkiſts, ſtill commanded an army, in which he led about the captive king, to give a ſanction to his attempt. Another battle was to drench the kingdom with the blood of its inhabitants: the queen and the earl met near St. Albans, where the queen was once again victorious; ſhe had the pleaſure to ſee the general, by whom ſhe was once defeated, now fly in his turn; and, what added to her glory, ſhe had the fortune to releaſe the king her huſband from his captivity. Her triumph was great, though contaminated with cruelty; but it was of ſhort continuance. The city of London was to be gained, but Warwick had already ſecured it in his intereſts: the citizens alſo feared her tumultuous army, and

refuſed

refuſed to open their gates upon her ſummons. In the mean time, Warwick aſſembled the people in St. John's-fields, and, ſhewing them the ſon of the late duke of York, demanded, whether they choſe to have him or Henry for their king? Upon which the people crying out A York! an aſſembly was quickly called, and the young duke being preſent, they elected him king, by the name of Edward IV. and conducted him, with great ceremony, to the palace where Henry uſed to lodge when within the walls of the city.

In the mean time queen Margaret collected a great army in the north, amounting to ſixty-thouſand men at arms. She was now to ſtrike her ſtrongeſt blow. The command of this army was given to a perſon who acted under her directions. On the other ſide, Warwick conducted young Edward, at the head of forty-thouſand men, to oppoſe her. Both ſides, at length, met near Santon, in the county of York. Never was England depopulated by ſo terrible a day. What a dreadful ſight to behold almoſt an hundred thouſand men, of the ſame country, fighting to ſatisfy the empty ambition of one or two weak and empty wretches, murdering each other for an idiot and a boy; the conteſt only which ſhould wear a crown with diamonds, or wield a gewgaw ſceptre! Strange infatuation! yet, ſuch as it was, not leſs than forty thouſand men were left dead in the field, in aſſerting this diſpute. Warwick gained a complete victory: Edward IV. was eſtabliſhed on the throne, and Margaret of Anjou was abandoned. She fled, for protection, to Scotland, with her ſon and huſband, in order to attempt new deſigns for the recovery of her kingdom. Edward now took down the head of his father from the walls of York, and put up the

heads

heads of the conquered generals in its ſtead. Each party, as it happened to be victorious, thus called in the executioner to complete the tragedy begun in the field; and our cruelty to each other, in civil diſcords, is what has impreſſed foreigners with an idea of Engliſh cruelty.

Though wretched as this reign was, yet the art of printing, which was introduced into it at that time, ſeemed to make amends for a part of its calamities. William Caxton, a mercer, was the firſt who practiſed the art at London; he tranſlated ſome books himſelf from the French, and printed the tranſlations of others. Among the writers of that time were lord Rivers and earl Tiptoft, whoſe labours, however, never ventured higher than tranſlation. To judge of the learning of thoſe times by the works of the laity in the vulgar tongue, we ſhall entertain the moſt deſpicable opinion of it; yet, when I read the Latin productions of ſome of the prieſts of that period, I cannot avoid allowing the authors no ſmall ſhare of erudition. The truth is, learning was ſeparated from the purpoſes of common life at that time, but by no means unknown or neglected by the clergy, as we are taught to believe by men who ſeem very little acquainted with writers of that period.

LETTER XXIV.

WHICH ever ſide was victorious in theſe times of civil ſlaughter, it was always ready to confirm its injuſtice with the ſhew of authority. The parliament uſually followed the conqueror, and fixed him upon the throne, when he had an army to back his pretenſions. Edward was, immediately

mediately upon his victory, confirmed by their unanimous approbation, while Henry and his queen were to ſeek for new reſources in France and Scotland. No calamity was able to abate Margaret's perſeverance: though ſo often overcome, yet ſhe was once more reſolved to enter England with five thouſand men, granted her by the French king, bringing the unfortunate Henry with her to enforce her claims. Her uſual ill fortune attended her; her little fleet was diſperſed by a tempeſt, and ſhe herſelf entered the Tweed with no ſmall difficulty. Again, however, ſhe offered her enemy battle, and was again defeated, near Hexham. The loſs of this battle ſeemed to deprive her of every reſource: ſhe and her huſband were now obliged to find ſafety in a ſeparate flight, without attendants, and without even the neceſſaries of life. The weak, unfortunate monarch, almoſt always imprudent, and conſequently unſucceſsful, thought he could lie concealed in England: his error was ſoon attended with the obvious conſequences; he was taken priſoner, carried to London with ignominy, and confined in the Tower.

A. D. 1461.

Margaret was rather more fortunate; for ſhe eſcaped, with the dukes of Somerſet and Exeter, out of the kingdom, and retired to her father, who, though very poor, ſtrove, as well as he could, to ſupply her with the mere neceſſaries of life. You are not to ſuppoſe the miſeries of the great, at thoſe times, were fictitious, as we find them at preſent; they, in reality, endured every calamity that poverty now inflicts on the obſcureſt of wretches. Philip de Comines ſays, that he ſaw the duke of Exeter following the duke of Burgundy's equipage, barefoot, and ſerving for his livelihood as footman. This was a ſtrange ſituation for a lord,

who

who had conducted armies, and was allied to kings and princes: but the times were barbarous; the princes on the coaſt of Negroland experience ſuch reverſes of fortune at this very day.

Edward, being now, by means of Warwick, fixed upon the throne, reigned in peace and ſecurity. A ſpirit of gallantry reigned in his court, mixed with cruelty, which ſeemed the diſtinguiſhing feature of thoſe times of diſcord. In the very ſame palace which one day ſmoaked with blood, a pageant or a maſk appeared the day following; and the king would at once gallant a miſtreſs and inſpect an execution.

As his amours, however, were likely to diſſatisfy his ſubjects, the earl of Warwick adviſed him to marry; and, with his conſent, went over to France to procure him Bona of Savoy, and the match was accordingly, by his means, concluded. But whilſt the earl was haſtening the negotiation in France, the king himſelf put an effectual ſtop to it at home, by marrying Elizabeth Woodville, with whom he had fallen in love, and whom he had vainly ſtrove to debauch, having thus given Warwick real cauſe of offence, he was reſolved to widen the breach by driving him from the council. We are apt to hate the man we have offended, as much as the man who has offended us: Edward was no ſooner eſtabliſhed in ſecurity by Warwick, than he began to be ungrateful. Warwick, whoſe prudence was equal to his bravery, ſoon made uſe of both to aſſiſt his revenge: he ſeduced Clarence, the king's brother, and, to confirm him in his intereſts, made him his ſon-in-law; and now, finding his plot ready for execution, he flies into open rebellion. Vengeance ſeemed to be the only motive he had in view: plots, truces, ſtratagems, and negotiations, followed each

other

other in a rapid ſucceſſion. But Warwick, long acquainted with intrigue and diſſimulation, was, at laſt, too ſubtile for the young king: inviting him, by a ſeeming promiſe of compoſition, to his houſe, he threw Edward off his guard; and Warwick, ſeizing the opportunity, made him a priſoner.

Nothing now appeared that could oppoſe Warwick's deſigns; he therefore diſbanded his troops as unneceſſary, and Edward was conſigned to the cuſtody of the archbiſhop of York. But ſoon an accident happened that overthrew all Warwick's expectations: Edward's behaviour, in confinement, was ſo very obliging, that he got leave, upon ſome occaſions, to hunt in a park adjoining to the place of his confinement; from thence he one day made his eſcape, by the aſſiſtance of a couple of his friends, and, contrary to all expectation, inſtantly repaired to York.

Fortune ſeemed to declare for Edward; wherefore marching ſome troops to London, the citizens immediately declared in his favour. It is ſurpriſing to think, how one party is ſeen this day at the head of numerous forces, while the next we behold it abandoned, and the adverſe party triumphing without a rival; a ſtrong proof of the fluctuating diſpoſition of the Engliſh. Edward now commanded a numerous army, while Warwick, and his brother Clarence, were attended by a few. The king, reſolving to take the advantage of their weakneſs, after having defeated a party commanded by lord Wells, and cut off his head, the uſual method of treating the priſoners of either party, he marched to give them battle. In this exigence they had no other courſe to take, but to embark, in order to ſcreen themſelves from impending danger.

ger. Having arrived ſafely in France, they now were reconciled to queen Margaret, their former enemy; and, returning from France, Warwick once more ſaw himſelf at the head of no leſs than ſixty thouſand men.

It was now become Edward's turn to fly the kingdom; and, eſcaping the dangers of the enemy, of the ſea, and of pirates, he landed ſafely in Holland. Warwick, in the mean time, advanced to London, and once more poor paſſive Henry was releaſed from priſon, and placed upon an uſeleſs throne. Warwick was received, among the people, by the name of *king maker*; a parliament was called, and Henry's right confirmed.

Edward, though an exile in Holland, had many partizans at home; and, after an abſence of about nine months, once more landed at Ravenſpur, where Henry IV. had landed upon a ſimilar occaſion. Though at firſt he was coldly received by the Engliſh, yet his army increaſed upon its march, and his moderation and feigned humility ſtill added to the number of his partizans. London, at this time, ever ready to admit the moſt powerful, opened her gates, and Henry was again taken from his throne to be ſent back to his old manſion.

Warwick at laſt found his party begin to decline, and Clarence, the king's brother, on whom he had the greateſt dependence, changed to the other ſide. In this ſtate of uncertainty, he knew no other expedient than to hazard a battle: he knew his forces to be inferior, but he was conſcious of the ſuperiority of his own generalſhip. With this reſolution he marched from St. Albans, and having advanced to Barnet, within ten miles of London, he met Edward, who was marching down

with

with a design to fight him. Warwick and Edward were the two most renowned generals of their age, and now was to be struck the decisive blow, that was either to fix Edward on the throne, or to overthrow his pretensions for ever. The unfortunate Henry was dragged along to be a spectator of the engagement; happy in his natural imbecillity, which seemed to opiate all his afflictions.

The battle began early in the morning, and lasted till noon: never did two armies fight with greater obstinacy and bravery; not honour, but life, depended upon the issue of the contest. The example of Warwick inspired his troops with more than common resolution; and the victory, for a while, seemed to declare for him: but his army, by reason of a slight mist, happened to mistake a body of their own forces for that of the enemy, fell furiously upon them, and this fatal error turned the fortune of the day. Warwick did all that experience, conduct, or valour, could suggest, to retrieve the mistake, but in vain. Finding, therefore, all hopes gone, he was resolved to sell his life dearly to the conquerors; and rushing, on foot as he was, into the midst of his enemies, he fell covered all over with wounds. Thus died the ambitious Warwick, who had made and unmade kings at pleasure, yet who never seemed to aspire at regal dignity himself. Ten thousand of his army shared the same fate with him, the king having ordered that no quarter should be given.

Margaret, who was ever fruitful in resources, was, at this time, returning from France, with her son the prince of Wales, where she had been negotiating a new supply. She had scarce time to refresh

refreſh herſelf from the fatigues of her voyage, when ſhe received the fatal news of the death of the brave Warwick, who was then her only defender. Though ſhe had hitherto bravely withſtood all the attacks of fortune, this was too violent a ſhock for nature to ſupport: her grief now, for the firſt time, found way in a torrent of tears; and, yielding to her unhappy fate, ſhe took ſanctuary in an abbey in Hampſhire.

She had not been here long, when ſhe found ſome few friends ſtill willing to aſſiſt her fallen hopes. The duke of Somerſet, the earl of Pembroke, and one or two lords more, came to offer her their lives and fortunes: a dawn of hope was ſufficient to raiſe her courage, and her numerous misfortunes gave way to the flattering proſpect of another trial. She had now fought battles in almoſt every province in England. Tewkeſbury park was the laſt ſcene that terminated her attempts. The duke of Somerſet headed her army; a man who had ſhared her dangers, and had ever been ſteady in her cauſe. He was valiant, generous, and polite, but raſh and headſtrong. When Edward firſt attacked him in his intrenchments, he repulſed him with ſuch vigour, that the enemy retired with precipitation; Somerſet, ſuppoſing them routed, immediately purſued, and ordered lord Wenlock to ſupport him, while he charged; but this lord diſobeyed his injunctions, and the forces of Somerſet were overpowered by numbers. Somerſet now, finding all gone, was unable to govern his rage: he had depended upon Wenlock; but when he beheld him inactive, in the very place where he had firſt drawn up his men, giving way to his tranſport, with his heavy battle-ax in both hands, he ran upon the

coward,

A. D. 1471. coward, and with one blow dashed out his brains.

After the battle, the queen, torpid with griefs, was taken prisoner, and afterwards had the misery of finding her son, the prince of Wales, in the same condition. But this noble youth was not long in bondage: being brought into the victor's presence, he appeared before him with undaunted majesty. Edward, surprised at the boy's behaviour, asked him how he durst enter into his dominions without leave? *I have entered the dominions of my father*, replied the prince, *to revenge his injuries, and to redress my own.* The barbarous monarch, enraged his intrepidity, struck him on the mouth with his gantlet: this seemed to be the signal for his death; Gloucester, Clarence, and others, like wild beasts, rushing upon the unarmed youth at one, stabbed him to the heart with their daggers. When the governors of a kingdom behave thus, what must be the behaviour of the people? To complete the tragedy, Henry himself, who had long been the passive spectator of all these cruelties, was now thought unfit to live. The duke of Gloucester, afterwards named Richard III. or the Crouch-back, entering his chamber alone, murdered him in cold blood. Of all those that were taken, none were suffered to survive but Margaret herself. It was, perhaps, expected that she would be ransomed by the king of France; and in this they were not deceived: Lewis XI. paid the king of England fifty thousand crowns for her freedom. Thus Margaret of Anjou, having sustained the cause of her husband in twelve battles, after having survived her fortune and her children, died a few years after in privacy in France, very miserable indeed,

indeed, but with no other claims to our pity, except her courage and her diſtreſſes.

Of all people the Engliſh are the moſt compaſſionate; a throne raiſed upon cruelty never wanted enemies among them, and nothing could ever have been more ridiculous, than attempting to govern ſuch ſubjects as the Engliſh by the hand of the executioner. The heads of either faction ſeemed to have been inſenſible of this truth, and it was their ill judged puniſhments, which, by turns, plunged them into new diſtreſſes. A tyrant, however, when once drenched in blood, knows not when to give over. Edward, being now freed from great enemies, turned to the puniſhment of thoſe of leſſer note: the gibbets were hung with his adverſaries, and their eſtates confiſcated to his uſe.

Yet, while he was thus rendering himſelf terrible on the one hand, he was immerſed in gallantry on the other. Nature, it ſeems, was not unfavourable to him in this reſpect, for he was univerſally allowed to be the moſt beautiful man of his time. The court ſeemed willing to countenance thoſe debaucheries in which they had a ſhare; and the clergy, as they themſelves practiſed every ſpecies of lewdneſs with impunity, were ever ready to lend abſolution to all his failings. The truth is, enormous vices had been of late ſo common, that adultery was held but a very ſlight offence: among the number of his miſtreſſes was the wife of one Shore, a woman of exquiſite beauty and good ſenſe, but who had not virtue enough to withſtand the temptations of a beautiful man and a monarch.

England now enjoying a temporary calm, the king thought the beſt way to ingratiate himſelf with the people was to aſſert his right to his do-

mains in France, which the insurrections of his father had contributed to alienate in the former reign: this proposal was sure of pleasing the English, who ever appeared more fond of splendid than useful acquisitions. To prosecute this scheme, therefore, he sent off to his ally, the duke of Burgundy, a reinforcement of three thousand men, and soon after passed over himself at the head of a numerous army. Lewis XI. then king of France, was, with reason, alarmed at this formidable invasion: he found himself unable to resist so powerful an antagonist, and therefore had recourse to treaty. This succeeded better than arms. The two kings had an interview at the bridge of Perpignan, and, upon the payment of a stipulated sum, Edward led his forces back to England. The English king wanted to return home to his mistresses, to spend upon them the money he had gotten; and the French monarch hoped to be able to refuse those sums which he had only given a promise to pay.

Edward returned to renew his cruelty and his excesses. His brother Clarence, who had assisted him in gaining the crown, had been, for some time, treated with indifference and disrespect: this Clarence thought an ill recompense for his former services, and often gave himself the liberty of invective in the king's absence. In this posture of things, the king happened to kill a favourite deer belonging to Mr. Thomas Burdet, a friend of the duke's: poor Burdet dropping some hasty expressions against the king, was sentenced to die, and executed in two days after. The duke of Clarence, upon the death of his friend, vented his grief in renewed reproaches against his brother: the king, unmindful of the ties of kindred, or

the

the debt of gratitude by which he was bound, had him arraigned, condemned, and executed, he was ſmothered in a butt of Malmſey wine. When men arrive at a certain ſtation of greatneſs, their regards are diſſipated on too great a number of objects to feel parental affection: the ties of nature are only ſtrong with thoſe who have but few friends or few dependents.

The reſt of Edward's life was ſpent in riot and debauchery; in gratifications that are pleaſing only to the narrow mind; in uſeleſs treaties, in which he was ever deceived; and in empty threats againſt the monarch who had deceived him. His parliament, now merely the miniſter of his will, conſented to a war with France, at a time when it was impoſſible it could ſucceed: all the lords unanimouſly declared, that they thought it both juſt and neceſſary. The people ſeemed equally pleaſed at the proſpect of a war, which might, in ſome meaſure, alleviate their domeſtic calamities. Great preparations were made on every ſide; but Edward died in the midſt of all his expectations. The character of this prince is eaſily ſummed up; his good qualities were courage and beauty; his bad qualities—every vice.

LETTER XXV.

HORRID as the laſt reign was, you muſt prepare for events in the next ſtill more heinous. Edward left two ſons, the eldeſt of whom, a boy between twelve and thirteen, was proclaimed king, by the name of Edward V. The queen, his mother, being herſelf newly raiſed among the nobility, ſeemed willing *A. D.* 1483.

to hide the meanneſs of her former condition amongſt a number of new promotions; this, as might naturally be expected, was diſpleaſing to the old nobility; and the duke of Glouceſter, a monſter both for the cruelty of his heart, and the deformity of his body, fomented their diſcontents. Having gained over lord Haſtings, the duke of Buckingham, and ſome other lords, to his intereſts, he made them a long ſpeech, tending to ſhew the danger that hung over their heads, if the queen ſhould have the government in her hands: he enlarged upon the uſurpations of her family, and the lengths they would be apt to run upon being inveſted with the ſupreme power. In ſhort, he ſpared neither diſſimulation nor artifice, nor oaths, to get the guardianſhip of the minority, and the cuſtody of the king's perſon.

His firſt ſtep, after being declared protector of the kingdom, was to get the king's brother alſo, a boy of about ſeven, who, with the queen his mother, had taken ſanctuary in Weſtminſter-abbey. The queen foreſaw the dangers which threatened her family; and, parting with her child, claſped him, with the laſt embrace, to her breaſt, and took leave of him with a ſhower of tears. The duke of Glouceſter, on the other hand, took his nephew in his arms, and, claſping him with feigned affection, declared, that, while he himſelf was alive, the child ſhould never want a parent. The young king, finding that he was to have the pleaſure of his brother's company, was greatly rejoiced, without conſidering the fatal intention of theſe preparations. A few days after, the protector, upon a pretext of guarding them from danger, conveyed them both to the Tower.

Having thus ſecured their perſons, the protector's next ſtep was to ſpread a report of their illegitimacy;

macy; and, by pretended obſtacles, to put off the day of the young king's coronation. Lord Stanley, a man of deep penetration, was the firſt to diſcloſe his fears of the protector's having ill deſigns: he communicated his ſuſpicions to lord Haſtings, who was firmly attached to the young king. Perhaps this lord's wiſhes, that ſuch a project might not be true, influenced his judgment, and confirmed him in his ſecurity. Soon, however, Cateſby, a vile creature of the protector's, was ſent to ſound him, and try whether he could not be brought over to ſide with the projected uſurpation: Haſtings appeared immoveable in his adherence to the king, and his death was therefore reſolved on.

With this deſign, the protector next day called a council in the Tower, under pretence of expediting the coronation. He came thither himſelf at nine o'clock in the morning, with a chearful countenance, ſaluting the members with the utmoſt affability, and with demonſtrations of unuſual good humour; then, going out for a ſhort time, he deſired his abſence might not interrupt the debates. In about an hour he returned again, quite altered, knitting his brows, biting his lips, and ſhewing, by frequent alterations of his looks, ſome inward perturbation. A ſilence enſued for ſome time, and the lords looked upon each other, not without reaſon, expecting ſome horrid cataſtrophe. At length he broke the dreadful ſilence. *My lords*, he ſaid, *what puniſhment do they deſerve who have conſpired againſt my life?* This redoubled the aſtoniſhment of the aſſembly, and the ſilence continuing, lord Haſtings at length made anſwer, That whoever did ſo, deſerved to be puniſhed as a traitor: upon which, the protector, with a ſtern

countenance, baring his withered arm, cried out, *See what the ſorcereſs my queen-ſiſter, and that wretch, Shore's wife, have done by their witchcrafts! Their ſpells have reduced my arm to this condition, and my whole body would have ſuffered the ſame calamity, but for a timely detection.* The amazement of the council ſeemed to increaſe at this terrible accuſation, and lord Haſtings again ſaid, IF *they have committed ſuch a crime, they deſerve puniſhment.* IF! cried the protector, with a loud voice; Doſt thou anſwer me with IFS? *I tell thee, that they have conſpired my death; and that thou, traitor, art an accomplice in their crime.* Thus having ſaid, he ſtruck the table twice with his hand, and the room was inſtantly filled with armed men. *I arreſt thee,* continues he, turning to Haſtings, *for high treaſon*; and, at the ſame time, delivered him to the cuſtody of the ſoldiers.

The council-room was now filled with tumult; and, though no reſcue was offered, yet the ſoldiers cauſed a buſtle, as if they apprehended danger. One of them narrowly miſſed cleaving lord Stanley's head with a battle-ax, but he eſcaped by ſhrinking under the table. In all probability, the fellow had orders fot this attempt; ſo that, when Stanley ſhould be thus killed, his death might be aſcribed to the tumult cauſed by an intended reſcue. However, eſcaping the blow, he was arreſted by the protector's order, who was well appriſed of his attachment to the young king. As for lord Haſtings, he was forced to make a ſhort confeſſion to the next prieſt that was at hand; the protector crying out, by St. Paul, that he would not dine till he had ſeen his head taken off. He was accordingly hurried out to the little green before the

Tower chapel, and there beheaded on a log of wood that accidentally lay there.

But not thoſe alone of his council were thus barbarouſly treated; on the very ſame day a ſimilar tragedy was acted at Pontefract caſtle, where the earl Rivers, the moſt polite and gallant man of the age in which he lived, and lord Grey, were both beheaded by a decree of that very ſame council, the members of which were now in ſuch danger themſelves. A plot againſt the king was the pretext for their execution; but, in reality, they died as being the only obſtacles to prevent his deſtruction.

The protector, having thus got rid of thoſe he moſt feared, undertook to puniſh even the leaſt dangerous; Jane Shore, the late king's miſtreſs, was an enemy too humble for him to fear any thing from her attempts, yet, as ſhe had been accuſed of witchcraft, of which all the world ſaw ſhe was innocent, he thought proper to puniſh her for faults of which ſhe was really guilty. This unhappy woman had been deluded formerly from her huſband, one Shore, a goldſmith, in Lombard-ſtreet, and continued with Edward the moſt guiltleſs miſtreſs in his luxurious and abandoned court: ſhe ever interceded for the diſtreſſed, and was ever applied to as a mediator for mercy. She was charitable, generous, and pleaſing in converſation; her wit and her beauty were ſaid to be irreſiſtible. Being blameleſs in other reſpects, the protector ordered her to be ſued for incontinency, for having left her huſband to live in adultery with another. It is poſſible, that the people were not diſpleaſed at ſeeing again reduced to her former meanneſs, a perſon who had for a while been raiſed above them, and enjoyed all the favours of the king. Her guilt

was too notorious to be denied; ſhe acknowledged the charge, and was condemned to walk barefoot through the city, and to do penance in St. Paul's church in a white ſheet, with a wax taper in her hand, before thouſands of ſpectators. She lived above forty years after this ſentence, reduced to the moſt extreme wretchedneſs. An hiſtorian, in the reign of Henry VII. aſſures us, that he ſaw her gathering herbs in a field near the city, to ſupply her nightly meal; a ſtrange employment for one who once had been the favourite of a court, and the miſtreſs of a king.

The protector now began to lay aſide his pretended regard for the ſons of the late king, and to aſpire to the throne more openly. To effect this, the duke of Buckingham, who by promiſes and bribes was devoted to his intereſts, tried every art to infuſe into the people an opinion of the baſtardy of the late king, and that of his children. Dr. Shaw, a popular preacher, was hired to harangue the people from St. Paul's croſs, to the ſame purpoſe. The preacher, after having diſplayed the incontinence of the queen, inſiſted upon the illegality of the young king's title, and the virtues of the protector. *It is he*, continued the ſycophant, *who carries in his face, in his ſoul, the image of virtue, and the marks of a true deſcent.* Still, however, the people continued ſilent, each fearing to begin the cry of King Richard, or deteſting the tendency of his ſermon. The duke of Buckingham, therefore, next undertook to perſuade them in his turn. His ſpeech turned upon the calamities of the laſt reign, and the baſtardy of the preſent pretender. He ſeemed apprehenſive, indeed, that the protector could not be prevailed upon to accept the crown,

but

but he hoped that the people would take every method to perſuade him. He concluded by deſiring every man to ſpeak his real ſentiments, and to give a poſitive anſwer, whether they would have the young baſtard or the virtuous protector? A ſilence for ſome time enſued; but, at length, ſome of the duke's own ſervants, who had ſlipped in among the preſs, cried out, Long live king Richard! This cry was ſeconded by ſome of the citizens who were previouſly bribed; and the mob at the door, a deſpicable claſs of people, ever pleaſed with novelty, repeated the cry, and, throwing up their caps, cried out, A Richard! A Richard! The duke, now taking the advantage of this faint approbation, next day, at the head of the mayor and aldermen, went to wait upon the protector with offers of the crown. Richard, with his uſual hypocriſy, appeared to the crowd in the gallery, between two biſhops, and, at firſt, pretended to be ſurpriſed at the concourſe. When he was informed that their buſineſs was to offer him the crown, he declined accepting it, alledging his love for the late king his brother, and his affection for the children under his care. Buckingham, ſeeming diſpleaſed with this anſwer, muttered ſome words to himſelf, and, at length, plainly told him, that all the people had determined upon making him king; that they had now proceeded too far to recede, and therefore were reſolved, in caſe of his refuſal, to offer it where it ſhould meet with a more ready acceptance. This was a reſolution which the protector's tenderneſs for his people could not permit him to ſee executed. *I ſee*, cried he, in a modeſt tone, *I ſee the kingdom is reſolved to load me with preferments, unequal to my abilities or my choice*;

yet since it is my duty to obey the dictates of a free people, I will! graciously accept their petition. I, therefore, from this moment, enter upon the government of England and France, with a resolution to defend the one, and to subdue the other. The crowd being thus dismissed, each returned home, pon-
A. D. 1483. dering upon the proceedings of the day, and making such remarks, as passion, interest, or prudence, might suggest.

One crime ever draws on others; for usurpation naturally requires security: as soon, therefore, as he was fixed upon the throne, Richard sent the governor of the Tower orders to put the two young princes to death. There was yet one man left in the kingdom, who had virtue enough to refuse being made the instrument of a tyrant's cruelty: the governor of the Tower, whose name was Blackenbury, submissively answered, that he could not imbrue his hands in their blood. A fit instrument, however, was not long wanting: one James Tyrrel was employed, and sent to command the Tower for one night. Tyrrel, that very night, whilst all were asleep, went to the chamber where the two young princes lay, here the murderer, for some time, hesitated in his base design, struck, as it is said, with the innocence of their looks; but, habit getting the better of remorse, he at last smothered them between two pillows, and caused them to be buried under a little stair-case, near where they lay. Vengeance, though late, followed this execrable wretch: he was executed for this fact in the succeeding reign, confessing his crime, and the manner of its execution.

The warlike spirit first excited by the conquest of France, and then kept up by the long civil war, seemed to have banished every sentiment of

virtue

virtue from the kingdom: cruelty and executions were grown ſo common, that the people now became familiar with blood and death: ſcarce a noble family in the kingdom which was not thinned by theſe terrible diſſenſions. The clergy ſeemed, at this time, quite ſeparated from the laity; they ſeldom ſuffered for treaſon, and were but little converſant in the bloody politics of the times. As for arts, ſciences, and commerce, they were totally neglected. In all this carnage and deſolation, one power was imperceptibly gaining ground; as the lords were declining, the commons were coming into authority: not ſo much expoſed as the former to the tempeſts of regal reſentment, they continued to increaſe in wealth and favour, and found ſafety in their humble ſtation.

LETTER XXVI.

THERE is ſomewhat that peculiarly ſtrikes the imagination in the tranſactions of this and the preceding reign; I have therefore treated them with more than uſual prolixity. Our tragic poets ſeem to have been ſenſible how much theſe ſtrange inſtances of depravation were ſuſceptible of a poetic dreſs. Every picture of the times is marked with ſtrong lines, like an African proſpect, where all is vaſt, wild, and terrible.

Richard had, at length, waded through every obſtacle to the throne, and now began, after the uſual manner of all uſurpers, to ſtrengthen, by his ill-got power, his foreign alliances. Senſible alſo of the influence of pageantry and ſhew upon the minds of the people, he cauſed himſelf to be

crowned firſt at London, and then at York. The clergy he endeavoured to ſecure in his intereſts, by great indulgences to them, and by his own hypocritical behaviour.

But, while he endeavoured to eſtabliſh his power, he found it undermining on a ſide from whence he leaſt expected it: the duke of Buckingham, who had been the principal inſtrument in placing him upon the throne, now began to expect the reward of his adherence. Richard, indeed, had given him ſeveral poſts and governments, but denied him a moiety of the confiſcated lands of Hereford, to which he had ſome family claims. Very great obligations between two friends, on either ſide, generally end in diſguſt: Buckingham ſuppoſed that his ſervices could never be over-rewarded; while Richard, on the contrary, was willing to curb his deſires, which ſeemed to increaſe by gratification. Soon therefore, the duke was diſguſted with the new monarch, and as ſoon conceived a ſcheme for depriving him of the crown; doubtful, for a while, whether he ſhould put in for the crown himſelf, or ſet up another. The latter opinion prevailed, and he was reſolved to declare for Henry, earl of Richmond, then an exile in Bretagne. Henry, of Richmond, was one of thoſe who had the good fortune to ſurvive the numerous maſſacres of the preceding reigns: he was the only remaining branch of the houſe of Lancaſter: he was deſcended from John of Ghaunt, but by the female line; his right to the throne was very doubtful, but the crimes of the uſurper ſtrengthened his claims. He had long lived in exile, and was once delivered up to the ambaſſadors of Edward IV. and was juſt upon the point of being brought back to England, to

ſuffer

ſuffer a cruel death; when the prince, who had delivered him up, repented what he had done, and took him from the ambaſſadors juſt as he was brought on ſhip-board. This was the youth whom the duke of Buckingham pitched upon to dethrone the tyrant, and a negotiation was commenced between them for that purpoſe.

Richard, in the mean time, either informed by his creatures, or made diſtruſtful by conſcious guilt, ſuſpected a conſpiracy, and could not avoid thinking Buckingham among the number of the conſpirators. Impreſſed with theſe ſuſpicions, he came to a reſolution of ſending for him to court, and the duke's refuſing to come confirmed him in his belief; but he had ſoon a plain conviction of his treachery, for word was brought that the duke of Buckingham was up in arms. The duke, having found that he could diſſemble with Richard no longer, had drawn together ſome Welſh forces, and began to march to the weſtern ſhore, where he had appointed young Richmond to land: Richard, however, no way diſmayed at the approaching danger, prepared to meet him with the few forces he then had in readineſs. However, fortune ſeemed to favour the uſurper, and render his preparations, for this time needleſs. As Buckingham was advancing, by haſty marches, towards Glouceſter, where he deſigned to paſs the Severn, juſt then the river was ſwollen to ſuch a degree, that the country, on both ſides, was deluged, and even the tops of mountains covered with water. It held ten days, during which the Welch army could neither paſs the river, nor ſubſiſt on the other ſide, where they found nothing but deſolation: at length, compelled by hunger, after having ſuffered a thouſand hardſhips, they all diſperſed, and returned home,

home, notwithſtanding the duke's intreaties to the contrary. In this helpleſs ſituation, the duke, after a moment's reflection, thought the propereſt place of ſafety he could fix upon was at the houſe of one Banniſter, who had been his ſervant, and who had received repeated obligations from his family. No maxim was ever more juſt, than that there is no friendſhip among the wicked: Buckingham had himſelf been firſt falſe to his king, and after to Richard, the creature of his own power; how then could he expect fidelity from others? A large reward was ſet upon the duke's head: the villain Banniſter, unable to reſiſt ſo great a temptation, went and betrayed his maſter to the ſheriff of Shropſhire, who ſurrounding the houſe with armed men, ſeized the duke in a peaſant's dreſs, and conducted him to Shrewſbury, where he was beheaded, without the form of a trial or delay.

In the mean time, Richmond landed in England, but, finding his hopes fruſtrated by the cataſtrophe of Buckingham, he haſtily ſet ſail again, and returned for Bretagne. Richard, thus freed from the impending danger, gave a looſe to cruelty, the favourite paſſion of his breaſt. In order to expedite his revenge, he gave one Aſhton an unbounded commiſſion to condemn and execute, upon the ſpot, ſuch as were deemed by him guilty or even ſuſpected of guilt. A cruel king never wants a bloody miniſter: Aſhton executed his commiſſion with the utmoſt rigour, putting huſbands to death in the preſence of their own wives, and children before the eyes of their parents. It is ſaid, that this execrable wretch, being ſolicited by a beautiful woman to releaſe her huſband, who was a priſoner upon ſuſpicion, he conſented, upon her

her promiſing to grant him a favour of another nature: ſcarce had the poor creature indulged his brutal deſire, when he brought her out, and pointed to her huſband, whom, in the mean time, he had given orders ſhould be hanged upon a neighbouring tree.

Still, however, the authority of a parliament was wanting to give ſanction to the injuſtice of Richard's proceedings; but, in theſe times of vice and ſervility, that was ſoon procured. The parliament approved his proceedings; confirmed the illegitimacy of Edward's children, paſſed an act of attainder againſt the earl of Richmond, and all his adherents; and ſeemed, upon the whole, more diſpoſed to ſlavery, than he to be a tyrant. One thing more was yet wanting to complete his ſecurity, the death of his rival: to effect this, he ſent ambaſſadors to the duke of Bretagne, with whom Richmond had taken ſhelter, ſeemingly upon buſineſs of a public nature, but, in reality, to treat with Laudais, that prince's prime miniſter, and to induce him to deliver up Richmond. The miniſter was baſe enough to enter into the negotiation; but Richmond, having had timely notice, fled away into France, and had juſt reached the limits of that kingdom, when his purſuers came up with him.

Richard, finding his deſign of ſeizing his enemy's perſon without ſucceſs, as his power became more precarious, became every day more ſuſpicious and more cruel. Lord Stanley who was now married to the widow of Edward IV. fell ſtrongly under his ſuſpicion; and, to ſecure his fidelity, he took the ſon as an hoſtage for his father's good behaviour. He now alſo reſolved to get rid of his preſent queen, in order to marry his

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own niece; a match from which he expected to derive several advantages. The lady he was then married to was formerly the wife of the young prince of Wales, that was murdered by him at Tewkesbury. It is no slight indication of the barbarity of the times, to find a woman thus taking the murderer of her husband for her second lord. She felt, however, the consequences of her ingratitude of the deceased prince, in the inhumanity of the present: Richard treated her with so much contempt and indifference, that she died of grief, according to his desire. But his wishes were not crowned with success in his applications to his niece: she treated his vile passion with retaliated contempt and just detestation.

In the perplexity caused by this unexpected refusal, it was that he received the news of Richmond's being once more landed at Milford-haven, with an intent to deprive him of the crown; but being informed that he brought with him but two thousand men, he seemed to despise the effort, and issued orders to oppose him with the greatest coolness and intrepidity. Richard was possessed of courage and military conduct, and these were his only virtues. Having heard that Richmond was marching with his little army to London, he was resolved to meet him on the way, and end the pretensions of the one, or the other, by a battle. Richmond, though very much inferior in number, was not less desirous of engaging; so that the two armies soon met at Bosworth-field, to determine a dispute that had now, for more than thirty years, drained England of its bravest subjects.

Richard perceiving his enemy advance, drew up his army, consisting of about thirteen thousand men, in order of battle: he gave the command of

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the van-guard to the duke of Norfolk, and led the main body himſelf, with the crown on his head, either deſigning by this to inſpire the enemy with awe, or to render himſelf conſpicuous to his own army. The earl of Richmond, who had not half the number of men, drew up his forces alſo in two lines, the earl of Oxford commanding the firſt, and he himſelf the ſecond: lord Stanley, in the mean time, poſted himſelf on one flank between the two armies, and his brother took his ſtation in the other, which was oppoſite. Richard, ſeeing him thus in a ſituation equally convenient for joining either army, immediately ſent him orders to join him, which the other refuſing, he gave inſtant command for beheading lord Stanley's ſon, whom he had kept as an hoſtage; but being perſuaded to poſtpone the execution till after the fight, he complied, and immediately ordered the trumpets to ſound to battle. The two armies approaching each other, the battle began with a ſhower of arrows, and ſoon the two ranks began to cloſe: this was what Stanley expected, who immediately, profiting himſelf of the occaſion, joined the line of Richmond, and turned the fortune of the day. In the mean while, Richard ſpurred up his horſe in the thickeſt of the fight, and Richmond quitted his ſtation behind, to encourage his troops by his preſence in the front. Richard, perceiving him, was willing to end all by one blow; and, with the fury of a lion, flew through thouſands to attack him. He ſlew Sir William Brandon, the earl's ſtandard-bearer, who had attempted to ſtop his career; Sir John Cheney, having taken Brandon's place, was thrown to the ground; Richmond, in the mean time, ſtood to oppoſe him, but the crowd interpoſing, they were ſeparated. Richard now, therefore,

fore, went to inſpire his troops at another quarter; but, at laſt, perceiving his army every where yielding or flying, and now finding that all was gone, he ruſhed with a loud ſhout, into the midſt of the enemy, and there met a better death than his actions had merited. After the battle his body being found amidſt a heap of ſlaughter, ſtripped naked, covered over with wounds, and the eyes frightfully ſtaring, it was thrown acroſs an horſe, the head hanging down on one ſide and the legs on the other, and ſo carried to Leiceſter. It lay there two days, expoſed to public view, and then was buried without farther ceremony.

Richard's crown being found, by one of the ſoldiers, in the field of battle, was immediately placed upon the head of the conqueror: the whole army, as if inſpired, with one voice, cryed out, Long live king Henry! Thus ended the bloody reign of Richard; and by his death, the race of the Plantagenet kings, that had been in poſſeſſion of the crown during the ſpace of three hundred and thirty years, became extinct. Thus ended alſo the conteſts between the houſes of York and Lancaſter, which had, for thirty years, been as a peſtilence to the kingdom, and in which above an hundred thouſand men loſt their lives, either by the executioner, or on the field of battle.

A. D. 1485.

Theſe diſſentions had reduced the kingdom to a ſtate of almoſt ſavage barbarity: laws, arts, and commerce, were entirely neglected for the practice of arms; and to be a conqueror was ſufficient, in the eyes of the people, to ſtand for every other virtue. They had, as yet, no idea of pacific government, nor could lend applauſe to thoſe who cultivated it, and, except only in their gallantry to the fair ſex, they little differed from the ancient painted inhabi-

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tants of the iſland. In theſe wars the women, though never ſo formidable, or never ſo active, unleſs accuſed of witchcraft, were exempted from capital puniſhments, which probably proceeded from a ſpirit of gallantry, the ſingle virtue of the times. As for the clergy, they were entirely diſtinct from the laity, both in cuſtoms, conſtitutions, and learning: they were governed by the civil law, drawn up by one of the Roman emperors; whereas the laity was governed by the common law, which was traditiouſly delivered to them from their anceſtors. The clergy (however we may be told to the contrary) underſtood and wrote Latin tolerably well; the laity, on the other hand, underſtood no Latin, but applied themſelves wholly to French, when they aſpired to the character of politeneſs. The clergy, as a body, little intereſted themſelves in the civil polity, and perhaps were not diſpleaſed to ſee the laity, whom they conſidered not as fellow-ſubjects, but rivals for power, weakening themſelves by continual conteſts: the laity regarded the clergy with blind veneration, and this veneration leſſened their regard for their king. In ſhort, as there was no virtue among the individuals of the nation, the government was like a feveriſh conſtitution, ever ſubject to ferment and diſorder. France ſerved, for a while, as a drain to the peccant humours; but, when that was no longer open, the diſorder ſeemed to increaſe in the internal part of the conſtitution, and produced all the horrors of civil war.

LETTER XXVII.

IT was in this ſtate of the nation that the earl of Richmond, who took the name of Henry VII. came to the throne. You are now to behold one of the greateſt revolutions that ever was brought about in any kingdom, effected by the prudence, clemency, and perſeverance of one great prince: a nation of tumult reduced to civil ſubordination; an inſolent and factious ariſtocracy humbled; wiſe laws enacted; commerce reſtored; and the peaceful arts rendered amiable to a people, for whom before war only had charms. In a word, you are now to turn to a period, where the whole government ſeems to put on a new form; and to view the actions of a king, if not the greateſt, at leaſt the moſt uſeful, that ever ſat upon the Britiſh or any other throne. Hitherto you have only read the hiſtory of a barbarous nation, obeying with reluctance, and governed by caprice: you are henceforth to view more refined politics, and better concerted ſchemes; to behold human wiſdom, as if rouſed from her lethargy of thirteen hundred years, exerting every art to reduce the natural ferocity of the people, and to introduce happineſs.

Henry's firſt care upon coming to the throne was to marry the princeſs Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV. and thus unite the intereſts of the houſes of Lancaſter and York: but, leſt the people ſhould ſuppoſe he claimed the crown upon the ſtrength of this alliance, he deferred her coronation till two years after, by which he made evident the priority of his own claim. His reign happily commenced with an obedience to the laws

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that had been hitherto unknown in England. An act had been paſſed, in the preceding reign, for the attainder of his friends and followers: this act ſtill continued in force, and many members of that houſe, by which it was to be repealed, were thoſe who were mentioned in the attainder. To ſuffer ſuch to join in repealing that ſtatute, would be admitting them judges in their own cauſe, to which Henry bravely and juſtly objected; they were, therefore, obliged to leave the houſe, till an act was paſſed to reverſe their attainder.

Before his reign, it was uſual, when any perſon was attainted, to take away his life, and give away his fortune to ſome court favourite: Henry wiſely perceived that this had two bad effects; it firſt excited reſentment by its cruelty, and, in the next place, only made the favourite too powerful for ſubjection. This prudent monarch took a better method to repreſs tumult and rebellion: he deprived ſuch as were caught in arms of their eſtates and fortunes, and theſe he reſerved for the uſe of the crown. By this means he deprived them of the power to injure him, and he ſtrengthened the ſinews of government by enriching the crown. A great part of the miſeries of his predeceſſors proceeded from their poverty, and the opulence of the nobility. Henry ſaw that money alone could turn the ſcale of power into his own hands, and therefore hoarded up all the confiſcations of his enemies with the utmoſt frugality. Avarice, upon theſe motives, is not only excuſable, but praiſe worthy; it is not meanneſs, but œconomy; and, whatever hiſtorians tell us of liberality in a king, it is, at beſt, a miſplaced virtue. Such liberalities are, in general, extorted from the poor, the induſtrious, and the uſeful;

useful; and bestowed, as rewards upon the rich, and powerful, and insinuating; upon the sycophants of a court, and flatterers of debauchery. Henry was different from his predecessors in this respect; he gave away few rewards to the courtiers about his person, and none but the poor shared his benefactions. He released all the prisoners for debt in his dominions, whose debts did not amount to forty shillings, and paid their creditors from the royal coffers. His œconomy rendered him not only useful to the poor, but enabled him to be just to his own creditors, either abroad or at home. Those sums which he borrowed from the city of London, or any of his subjects, he repaid at the appointed day. with the utmost punctuality; and thus, as he grew just in his own dominions, he became respectable abroad.

Immediately after his marriage with Elizabeth, he issued out a general pardon to all such as chose to accept it; but those lords who had been the favourites of the last reign, and long used to turbulence refused his proffered tenderness, and flew to arms. Lord Lovel, Humphrey and Thomas Stafford, placed themselves at the head of this insurrection: Henry sent the duke of Bedford to oppose the insurgents, with orders to try what might be the effects of a proffered pardon, previous to his attempts to reduce them. The duke punctually obeyed his instructions, but the rebels seemed to listen to no accommodation: but, contrary to all expectation, lord Lovel, apprehensive of being deserted by his followers, first shewed them the example, and fled away to Flanders. The rebel army, now without a leader, submitted to the mercy of the king, which they received. The

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Staffords, who were in the mean time beſieging Worceſter, hearing of the ſurrender of their confederates, attempted to take ſanctuary in a church which had no privileges to protect them: being taking from thence, the eldeſt of the brothers was executed, the other received a pardon.

But the people were become ſo turbulent and factious, by a long courſe of civil war, that no governor could rule them, nor any king pleaſe. One rebellion ſeemed extinguiſhed only to give riſe to another: the king kept, at that time, a ſon of the duke of Clarence, who had been formerly drowned in a butt of wine, as has been mentioned, a priſoner in the Tower. This poor youth, who was ſtyled the earl of Warwick, had long been a ſtranger to liberty; he was unacquainted with men and things, and ſo little converſant with common life, from his long and early confinement, that he knew not the difference, to uſe the words of the hiſtorians, between a duck and an hen. This unhappy boy, harmleſs as he was, was made an inſtrument to deceive the people. A prieſt of Oxford had trained up one Lambert Simnel, a baker's ſon, to counterfeit the perſon of this earl; and inſtructed him to talk upon ſome facts and occurrences relative to the court of king Edward. Thus, having prepared him for his purpoſe, he ſet out for Ireland, judging that the propereſt theatre to open the ſcene. The plot unfolded to his wiſh: Simnel was received and proclaimed king of Ireland; and he was conducted, by the people and judges, with great pomp to the caſtle, where he was treated conformably to his pretended birth and diſtinction.

The king could not avoid being troubled at this impoſture, becauſe he ſaw his mother-in-law at

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the bottom of it: he was reſolved, therefore, to take the advice of his council upon this occaſion, who, after due deliberation, determined upon confining the old queen to a monaſtery; but, to wipe off the aſperſion of treaſon from one to whom he was ſo nearly allied, he gave out that ſhe was thus puniſhed for having formerly delivered up the princeſs, her daughter, to king Richard. The people, as uſual, murmured upon this occaſion; but the king, unmindful of their idle clamours, perſiſted in his reſolution, and ſhe remained in confinement till ſhe died, which did not happen till ſeveral years after. The next reſolution of the king's council was to ſhew the earl of Warwick, who was ſtill confined in the Tower, publickly to the people: in conſequence of this, he was led through the principal ſtreets of London, and conducted, in a ſolemn proceſſion, to St. Paul's, where great numbers were aſſembled to ſee him. Still, however, they proceeded at Dublin to honour their pretended monarch, and he was crowned, with great ſolemnity, in preſence of the earl of Kildare, the Chancellor, and other officers of ſtate. Such impoſitions upon the people were very frequent, at that time, in ſeveral parts of Europe: Lorrain, Naples, and Portugal, had their impoſtors, who continued for a long time to deceive without detection. In fact, the inhabitants of every county were ſo much confined to the limits of their own peculiar place of abode, and knew ſo little of what was paſſing in the reſt of the world around them, that nothing was more eaſy than to deceive. King Simnel, being now joined by lord Lovel, and one or two lords more of the diſcontented party, reſolved to paſs over into England, and accordingly landed in Lancaſhire:

Lancaſhire: from thence he marched to York, expecting the country would riſe and join him as he paſſed along. But in this he was deceived; and he ſoon had the mortification to find, that the king himſelf was coming up with a ſuperior force to give him battle. The event of the conteſt was ſuch as might have been expected; the earl of Lincoln, who commanded for Simnel, was overthrown and ſlain in battle, and the impoſtor himſelf taken priſoner. Henry, had now an opportunity of ſhewing the humanity and the greatneſs of his mind: Simnel was pardoned, and given a mean employment in the king's kitchen, and afterwards preferred to be one of his falconers, in which poſt he died. As for the prieſt, his inſtructor, he was made a priſoner for life.

Things being thus adjuſted, we may turn to France, which had long been the grave of the Engliſh, who yet coveted nothing ſo much as to continue the war there. Henry had all along perceived the futility of conqueſts upon the continent, conqueſts that could produce no other advantage than military glory; but, while he internally deſpiſed ſuch pernicious triumphs, he was obliged, in order to gain popularity, to countenance them. He therefore often pretended, that he was going to raviſh his kingdom once more from the uſurper, and to lay all France in blood; but, in fact, he had nothing farther from his heart. As far as negotiations and threats went, he did all that lay in his power to keep the jarring ſtates of that kingdom nearly balanced, and conſequently feeble,; but, as for ſuccours of men and money, he too well knew the value of both to exhauſt them, in the manner of his predeceſſors, upon ſuch vain projects.

The parliament, however, was taught to believe, that he intended ſomething conſiderable againſt France; and they, ever chearful when France was to be oppoſed, furniſhed him with the neceſſary ſupplies. But money was, at that time, more eaſily granted than levied in England. A new inſurrection aroſe when the ſupplies came to be collected, and the earl of Northumberland was killed by the mob of Yorkſhire, while he attempted to enforce obedience to the laws. The mutineers did not ſtop there; by the advice of one John-a-Chamber, an incendiary, they ſet Sir John Egremont at their head, and marched towards London to give the king battle: the conſequence of this raſh ſtep was the defeat of the rebels, and the death of John-a-Chamber, their ringleader. It was neceſſary to treat this man with rigour, to induce a more ready compliance to the future grants of parliament, and prevent all inſurrections on the ſame occaſion; for now people ſeemed continually more willing to revolt than to pay their taxes.

One would not have imagined, by the ſucceſs of Simnel's impoſture, that it could have produced imitations; but the old ducheſs of Burgundy, ſiſter to Edward IV. finding the former fraud had deceived ſo many, was reſolved to project a new ſcheme, with more art and greater plauſibility. She firſt ſpread a report, that the young duke of York, ſaid to have been murdered in the Tower, was ſtill alive; and ſoon a youth made his appearance that took upon him the title of the duke of York. The perſon pitched upon to play this part was called Perkin Warbeck, the ſon of a Flemiſh Jew, a youth of a beautiful perſon, good underſtanding, and poſſeſſing ſomething in his carriage and manner far above his birth or circumſtances. The

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king of France, ever attentive to ſow the ſeeds of diviſion in England, received him at his court, and gave him proper encouragement; but, at the interceſſion of Henry, diſmiſſed him, upon the proſpect of a peace. Having quitted France, Perkin went to ſeek protection from the ducheſs of Burgundy, taking the greateſt care to conceal his former acquaintance. At their firſt meeting, the ducheſs pretended much diſpleaſure at his aſſurance, in aſſuming the title of her nephew; but ſoon after, as if brought over by conviction, ſhe owned him for the duke of York, and gave him a guard ſuitable to that dignity. The Engliſh, ever ready to revolt, gave credit to this new impoſture, and the young man's prudence, converſation, and deportment, ſerved to confirm what their credulity had begun. All ſuch as were diſguſted with the king prepared to join him; but particularly thoſe that were formerly Henry's favourites, and had contributed to place him on the throne, thinking their ſervices could never be ſufficiently repaid, were now the chief heads of the conſpiracy. Theſe were joined by numbers, ſome greedy of novelty, ſome blindly attached to their leaders, and ſome induced, by their deſperate fortunes, to wiſh for a change.

Whilſt the king's enemies were thus combining to revolve the kingdom in its former calamities, he himſelf was no leſs intent upon preventing the impending danger. He endeavoured to undeceive the people, firſt by ſhewing that the duke of York was really dead, and by puniſhing his murderers; and next by tracing Perkin, the impoſtor, to his primitive meanneſs. The laſt of theſe projects was not eaſily executed; for Warbeck's parents and place of abode were ſo well concealed, that it was

almoſt impoſſible to come to a knowledge of them. But Henry, at length, won over Sir Robert Clifford, who was then accompanying the impoſtor in Flanders, and had been entruſted with his and the ducheſs's ſecrets. From Clifford the king learned, not only their deſigns, but the names of the conſpirators, and had ſeveral of them arreſted. His former lenity, however, did not exempt him from freſh ingratitude: he found that the lord high chamberlain, brother to the famous lord Stanley, who had been lately created earl of Derby, was among the number of thoſe who now had conſpired againſt him. Though this nobleman had been loaded with favours, and was even then poſſeſſed of an immenſe fortune, yet, ſtill diſſatisfied, he ſought more from his country's calamities. He was therefore arreſted by the kings order, and, confeſſing his crime, was ſentenced to ſuffer that death he ſo juſtly merited. You have hitherto obſerved how difficult it was to rule the Engliſh at this time; each province ſeemed deſirous of placing ſome particular family upon the throne, and more eagerly took up arms, than willingly diſpoſed themſelves to legal ſubordination. To mix lenity with juſtice, upon proper occaſions, required a very nice diſcernment: Henry ſhewed his judgment in this particular. Whenever a conſpirator took up arms againſt him, from a conſcientious adherence to principle, and from a love of the houſe of York, he generally found pardon; but, if the only motive of his conſpiring was a love of change, or an illicit deſire to ſubvert thoſe laws by which he was governed, he was then treated with more ſeverity.

While Warbeck's adherence were thus diſappointed in England, he himſelf attempted landing

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in Kent, but, being beat off from that coaſt by the inhabitants, he went from thence to Ireland: finding his hopes fruſtrated there alſo, he went next to try his ſucceſs in Scotland. Here his fortune began to mend; James III. who was then king of that country, received him very favourably, acknowledged his pretenſions to be juſt, and ſoon after gave him, in marriage, a daughter of the earl of Huntley, one of the moſt beautiful and accompliſhed ladies of her time. But not content with theſe inſtances of favour, he was reſolved to attempt ſetting him upon the throne of England. It was expected, that, upon Perkin's firſt appearance in that kingdom, all the friends of the houſe of York would riſe in his favour: upon this ground, therefore, the king of Scotland entered the country with a ſtrong army, and proclaimed the young adventurer wherever he went; but, contrary to expectation, he found none to ſecond his claims; and, thus diſappointed, he again retreated back to Edinburgh, where he continued to reſide, till, upon the concluſion of a treaty of peace between the two kingdoms, he was once more obliged to leave Scotland, and to ſeek for a new protector.

Perkin had now, for the ſpace of five years, continued to alarm the king; he had been acknowledged in France, Flanders, Ireland, and Scotland, as lawful heir to the Britiſh crown, and had made ſome bold attempts to ſecond his pretenſions. The time, at length, came, that he was to act the ſame character in England, which he had performed elſewhere with ſo much ſucceſs. Some months before this there had been an inſurrection in Cornwall; the inhabitants of that diſtant county, upon levying the taxes granted by parliament,

refuſed to contribute to expences which were deſtined for the defence of an oppoſite part of the kingdom. Every inſurrection now was followed with a project of dethroning the king; they therefore marched, with one Flammock, a lawyer, Bodely, a carrier, and lord Audley, at their head, directly to London, and encamped upon Blackheath. There the king's forces ſurrounded and attacked them: the battle was bloody; two thouſand of theſe poor deluded wretches were killed upon the ſpot, and the reſt forced to ſurrender at diſcretion. Lord Audley, and one or two of their ringleaders, were executed; but the reſt, to the number of four thouſand, were diſmiſſed home again in ſafety. But this moderation had not the proper effect upon minds too ignorant for gratitude; they attributed the king's clemency to fear, and, upon returning home, induced their friends to believe that the whole kingdom was ready to riſe to vindicate their quarrel. It was now, therefore, determined to ſend for Perkin Warbeck, who was then in Ireland, to put himſelf at their head. Perkin did not heſitate to accept their invitation; and, taking upon him the command, choſe for his privy council one Hern, a broken mercer, Skelton, a taylor, and Aſtley, a ſcrivener. He publiſhed a proclamation alſo againſt Henry, in which he took the title of Richard IV. and, having drawn together a body of three thouſand men, attempted to ſtorm the city of Exeter, but without ſucceſs.

Henry, having received advice of his proceedings, ſaid merrily, that he ſhould now have the pleaſure of viſiting a perſon whom he had long wiſhed to ſee, and then took the neceſſary meaſures to oppoſe him. Perkin, on the other hand,

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ſeeing that the king was marching to attack him, loſt all courage, and, in the night, took ſanctuary in the monaſtery of Bewley. Soon after, upon promiſe of a pardon, he ſurrendered himſelf to the king, and was confined in the Tower; but, eſcaping from thence, and finding it impracticable to get out of the kingdom, he again took ſanctuary in the monaſtery of Bethlem. The prior of this houſe gave him up to the king, upon promiſe of a pardon; and Perkin was now a ſecond time confined in the Tower: but, plotting, even there, againſt the king, he and the earl of Warwick, being convicted of deſigns to kill the keeper of the Tower, and ſo eſcape, were both put to death. *A. D.* 1499.

There was as yet, in Henry's reign, nothing but plots, treaſons, inſurrections, ingratitude, impoſture, and puniſhments. You have ſeen ſeveral of theſe fomenters of treaſon brought to juſtice, yet infinitely greater numbers pardoned; but there was a wide difference between the puniſhments of this, and the arbitrary ſentences of the reigns preceding. The courts of judicature now ſat upon every criminal, uninfluenced by the royal authority; and ſcarce one perſon was puniſhed for treaſon, but ſuch as would, at preſent, have received the ſame rigorous treatment. A king, who can reign without ever puniſhing, is happy; but that monarch muſt certainly be undone, who, through fear, or ill-timed lenity, ſuffers repeated guilt to eſcape without notice. When a country becomes quite illicit, puniſhments then, like the loppings in a garden, only ſerve to ſtrengthen the ſtock, and prepare for a new harveſt of virtues.

LETTER XXVIII.

LET us now exhibit that part of Henry's reign in which he moſt deſerves our admiration, in which we ſhall ſee him as the friend of peace, and the refined politician. Indeed, no man loved peace more than he, and much of the ill-will of his ſubjects aroſe from his attempts to repreſs their inclination for war. The uſual preface to his treaties was, That, when Chriſt came into the world, peace was ſung; and, when he went out of the world, peace was bequeathed. He had no ambition to extend his power, except only by treaties, and by wiſdom; by theſe he rendered himſelf much more formidable to his neighbours, than his predeceſſors had done by their victories. They were formidable only to their own ſubjects; Henry was dreaded by rival kings.

He all along had two points principally in view; one to depreſs the nobility and clergy, and the other to humanize and raiſe up the populace. From the ambition of the former, and the blind dependence of the latter, all the troubles in former reigns aroſe; every nobleman was poſſeſſed of a certain number of ſubjects, over whom he had an abſolute power, and, upon every occaſion, could influence numbers to join in revolt and diſobedience.

He firſt, therefore, conſidered, that giving theſe petty monarchs a power of ſelling their eſtates, which before they had not a right to do, would greatly weaken their intereſt. With this view

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he got an act passed, in which the nobility were granted a power of alienating their possessions; a law infinitely pleasing to the commons, nor was it disagreeable even to the nobility, since they thus had an immediate recourse for supplying the waste of prodigality, and the demands of their creditors. The blow reached their posterity alone, but they were too ignorant to be sensible of remote sufferings.

His next scheme was to prevent their giving liveries to many hundreds of dependents, who served like standing forces, to be ready at the summons of their lord. By an act passed in his reign, none but menial servants were permitted to wear a livery, under severe penalties; and this law he took care to enforce with the utmost rigour. It is told us by Bacon, that the king, one day paying a visit to the earl of Oxford, was entertained by him with all possible splendor and magnificence. When the king was ready to depart, he saw ranged, on both sides, a great number of men, dressed up in very rich liveries, apparently to do him honour. The king, surprised at such a number of domestics, as he thought them, cried out, *What, my lord of Oxford, are all these fine fellows your menial servants?* The earl, not perceiving the king's drift, answered, with a smile, that they were only men whom he kept in pay to do him honour upon such occasions. At this the king started a little, and said, *By my faith, my lord, I thank you for your good cheer; but I must not suffer to have the laws broken: my attorney-general must talk with you.* The historian adds, that the king exacted a severe fine for this transgression of the statute.

It has been already obſerved what a perverted uſe was made of monaſteries, and other places appropriated to religious worſhip, by the number of criminals who took refuge in them. This privilege the clergy aſſumed as their undoubted right; and thoſe places of pretended ſanctity were become the abode of murderers, robbers, and conſpirators. Witches and necromancers were the only perſons who could not avail themſelves of the advantages of the ſecurity theſe afforded: they whoſe crimes were only fictitious, were the only people who had not the benefit of ſuch a retreat. Henry uſed all his intereſt with the pope to aboliſh theſe ſanctuaries, but without effect; all that he could procure was, that, if thieves, murderers, or robbers, regiſtered as ſanctuary-men, ſhould ſally out and commit freſh offences, and retreat again, in ſuch caſes, they might be taken out of the ſanctuary, and delivered up to juſtice.

Henry politically pretended the utmoſt ſubmiſſion to all the pope's decrees, and ſhewed the greateſt reſpect to the clergy, but ſtill was guided by them in no ſingle inſtance of his conduct. The pope, at one time, was ſo far impoſed upon by his ſeeming attachment to the church, that he even invited him to renew the cruſades for recovering the Holy Land. Henry's anſwer deſerves to be remembered: he aſſured his holineſs, that no prince in Chriſtendom would be more forward than he to undertake ſo glorious and neceſſary an expedition; but, as his dominions lay very diſtant from Conſtantinople, it would be better to apply to the kings of France and Spain for their aſſiſtance; and that, in the mean time, he would come to their aid himſelf, *as ſoon as all the differences between the Chriſtian princes were brought to an end.*

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This was, at once, a polite refuſal and an oblique reproach.

Henry had ſeen the fatal conſequences of having favourites, and therefore reſolved to have none; he even excluded, from his privy-council, all ſuch as, by their titles or fortune, might attempt to govern him, inſtead of executing his intentions. His council was compoſed of private men, who had learning and wiſdom to adviſe, but neither influence nor ambition to govern.

But, while he was thus employed in lowering his nobility and clergy, he was uſing every art to extend the privileges of the people. In former reigns they were ſure to ſuffer, on whatever ſide they fought, if they had the misfortune to loſe the victory: this rendered each party deſperate, in caſes of civil war; and this was the cauſe of ſuch terrible ſlaughters. He therefore produced the paſſing of an act, by which it was eſtabliſhed, that no perſon ſhould be impeached or attainted for aſſiſting the king *for the time being*, or, in other words, him who ſhould be then actually on the throne. This excellent ſtatute ſerved to repreſs the deſire of civil war, as ſeveral would naturally take arms in defence of that ſide on which they were certain of loſing nothing by a defeat, and their numbers would intimidate inſurgents.

But his greateſt efforts were directed to promote trade and commerce, becauſe this naturally introduced a ſpirit of liberty among the people, and diſengaged them from their dependence on the nobility. Before this happy æra all our towns owed their original to ſome ſtrong caſtle in the neighbourhood, where ſome great lord generally reſided; and theſe alſo were made uſe of as priſons for all ſorts of criminals. In this alſo there was generally a

garriſon, or a number of armed men, who depended on the nobleman's bounty for ſupport. The number of theſe, of courſe, drew all the artificers, victuallers, and ſhop-keepers, to ſettle in ſome place adjacent, in order to furniſh the lord and his attendants with what neceſſaries they wanted. The farmers alſo and huſbandmen, in the neighbourhood, built their houſes there, to be protected againſt the numerous gangs of robbers that hid themſelves in the woods by day, and infeſted the country by night, who were called Robertſmen. Henry, on the other hand, endeavoured to bring the towns from ſuch a neighbourhood, by inviting the inhabitants to a more commercial ſituation. He attempted to teach them frugality and payment of debts, the life and ſoul of induſtry, by his own example; and never omitted the rights of commerce in all his treaties with foreign princes.

About this time the whole world ſeemed to improve: Sweden, France, and Spain, enjoyed excellent monarchs, who encouraged and protected the riſing arts. The Portugueſe had ſailed round the cape of Good Hope, and Columbus had made the diſcovery of America: Henry, in imitation of them, gave a patent to ſome Briſtol and Portugueſe merchants to go in queſt of new countries. But an accident gave him a better opportunity of improving commerce, than his moſt ſanguine hopes could have aſpired to: the king of Spain and his queen, being upon their return to their own dominions, after the concluſion of a ſucceſsful war in Holland, were driven by a ſtorm, on the coaſts of England. As ſoon as Henry had notice of their arrival, he received them both with marks of the ſincereſt friendſhip and reſpect, meditating, in the mean time, how to make his ſubjects reap ſome advantage

vantage from the accident. He therefore treated them with a ſplendor which was by no means agreeable to his own nature; and while he kept them thus entertained with a round of pageantry and amuſements, he concluded a treaty of commerce, which has, even to this day, continued to be beneficial to his poſterity.

Having thus at length ſeen his country civilized, the people pay their taxes without inſurrections, the nobility learning a juſt ſubordination, the laws alone ſuffered to inflict puniſhment, towns began to ſeparate from the caſtles of the nobility; commerce every day encreaſed; foreigners either feared England, or ſought its alliance; and the ſpirit of faction was happily extinguiſhed at home. He was at peace with all Europe, and he had iſſued out a general pardon to his own ſubjects. It was in this ſituation of things that he died, of the gout in his ſtomach, having lived fifty-two years, and reigned twenty-three. Since the time of Alfred, England had not ſeen ſuch another king. He rendered his ſubjects powerful and happy, and wrought a greater change in this kingdom, than it was poſſible to expect could be effected in ſo ſhort a time. If he had any fault, it was, that, having begun his reign with œconomy, as he grew old, his deſires ſeemed to change their object, from the uſe of money, to the pleaſure of hoarding it; but we can eaſily excuſe him, as he only ſaved for the public, the royal coffers being then the only treaſury of the ſtate; and, in proportion to the king's finances, the public might be ſaid to be either rich or indigent.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

NEVER did a prince come to the throne with a conjuncture of ſo many fortunate circumſtances in his favour as Henry VIII. *A. D.* 1509. who now took upon him the government of the kingdom. His prudent father left him a peaceable kingdom, prudent miniſters, and a well ſtored treaſury. All factions were extinguiſhed, and all diviſions united in his perſon: he by the father's ſide claimed from the houſe of Lancaſter, and by the mother's from the houſe of York. He was at peace with all Europe, and his ſubjects were every day growing more powerful and more wealthy: commerce and arts had been introduced in the former reign, and they ſeemed to find in England a favourable reception. The young king himſelf was beautiful in perſon, expert in polite exerciſes, and loved by his ſubjects. The old king, who was himſelf a ſcholar, had him inſtructed in all the learning of the times; ſo that he was perfectly verſed in ſchool divinity at the age of eighteen.

Yet, from this beginning, you muſt not expect to read the hiſtory of a good prince. All theſe advantages were either the gift of nature, of fortune, or of his father: with all theſe happy talents, Henry VIII. wanted the two great requiſites in forming every good character, wiſdom and virtue. The learning he had, if it might be called by that name, ſerved only to inflame his pride, but not controul his viſcious affections. The love of his ſubjects was teſtified by their adulations, and ſerved as another meteor to lead him aſtray. His vaſt wealth, inſtead of relieving his ſubjects, or increaſing his power, only contributed to ſup-

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ply his debaucheries, or gratify the rapacity of the miniſters of his pleaſure. But happy for him, had his faults reſted here: he was a tyrant; humanity takes the alarm at his cruelty, and, whatever fortunate events might have been the conſequence of his deſigns, no good man but muſt revolt at the means he took for their accompliſhment.

The firſt act of injuſtice which marked his reign was his proſecution of Empſom and Dudley, the judges whom his father had conſtituted to enquire into caſes of treaſon, and levy fines proportionable to the offence. Their conduct was examined, but, nothing being found againſt them that could amount to a capital conviction, a falſe accuſation was produced, and they were convicted of having plotted againſt the new king, and received ſentence to be beheaded, which was executed accordingly.

Theſe two judges had been long hated by the people, though apparently without cauſe; they only put the laws in execution againſt criminals, and, inſtead of their lives, deprived the guilty of their fortunes. This action of an unjuſt compliance with popular clamour, was followed by another ſtill more detrimental to the nation, yet more pleaſing to the people: the ſpirit of chivalry and conqueſt was not yet quite extinguiſhed in the nation; France was ſtill an object of deſire, and Henry was reſolved once more to ſtrike at the crown. It was in vain that one of his old prudent counſellors objected, that conqueſts on the continent would only be prejudicial to the kingdom, and that England, from its ſituation, was not deſtined for extenſive empire; the young king, deaf to all remonſtrances, and perhaps inſpired by the voice of the people, reſolved to lead an army into that kingdom. The conſequence of the campaign

paign was a uſeleſs victory and an empty triumph. The French fled without fighting; a truce was concluded between the two kings; and Henry returned home to diſſipate, in more peaceable follies, the large ſums that had been amaſſed for very different purpoſes by his father.

But while he thus changed from one pleaſure to another, it was requiſite to find out a miniſter and favourite who would take care of the kingdom. Indifferent princes ever attempt to rule, and are ruled, by favourites, and ſoon a proper perſon was found to anſwer the king's intention in this particular: the man I mean was the famous cardinal Wolſey; and, as a great part of his reign was *ruled* by him, his hiſtory may, with propriety, make a part in that of his maſter. Thomas Wolſey was the ſon of a private gentleman (and not of a butcher, as is commonly reported) in Ipſwich: he was ſent to Oxford ſo early, that he was a bachelor at fourteen, and from that time called the boy bachelor. He roſe, by degrees, upon quitting college, from one preferment to another, till he was made rector of Lymington by the marquis of Dorſet, whoſe children he had inſtructed. He had not long reſided at this living, when one of the juſtices of the peace put him in the ſtocks, for being drunk and raiſing diſturbances at a neighbouring fair. This diſgrace, however, did not retard his promotion; he roſe by degrees, till he was, at laſt, intruſted with negotiating an intended marriage between Henry VII. and Margaret of Savoy. His diſpatch, upon that occaſion, procured him the deanery of Lincoln; and in this ſituation it was that Henry VIII. pitched upon him as a favourite, and entruſted him with the adminiſtration of affairs. Preſently after this, being

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introduced at court, he was made privy counſellor, and, as ſuch, had an opportunity of ingratiating himſelf with the king, who found him at once ſubmiſſive and enterpriſing. Wolſey ſung, laughed, danced, with every libertine of the court; and his houſe was the ſcene of all the king's criminal pleaſures and amours. To ſuch a weak and vicious monarch as Henry, qualities of this nature were highly pleaſing, and Wolſey was made his prime miniſter, and managed the whole kingdom at his pleaſure. The people ſaw, with indignation, the new favourite's mean condeſcenſions to the king, and his arrogance to themſelves. They had long regarded the vicious inſolence and unbecoming ſplendor of the clergy with envy and deteſtation, and Wolſey's greatneſs ſerved to bring a new odium upon that body, already too much the object of the people's diſlike.

Wolſey had ſome talents as a miniſter, but his failings out-balanced them, being exceſſively revengeful, ambitious, and intolerably proud. Among other inſtances of his ambition, he aſpired at the popedom. Ferdinand, who was then emperor of Germany, promiſed him his intereſt to procure it, and this conſequently attached the Engliſh miniſter more cloſely to the emperor: this monarch was then at war with France, and each power ſolicited the alliance of England. It was the intereſt of the Engliſh calmly to look on as ſpectators of the quarrel, and ſuffer its rivals in power to grow weak by their mutual animoſity: Wolſey, however, preferring his own intereſt to that of his country or his maſter, engaged in a league againſt France. Soon after however, the pope dying, and the emperor failing in his promiſe, Wolſey,

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in revenge, induced his master to change sides, and assist France against Ferdinand.

A victory over the Scots, rather ostentatious than useful, served, in some measure, to repress the discontents of the people during this mal-administration of the ecclesiastical favourite: this victory was obtained by the earl of Surry over James IV. of Scotland; it was fought at Flodden field, and the Scots, upon this occasion, lost the flower of their nobility and gentry, and James, their king, was slain in battle.

Success ever serves to stop the murmurings of the English, and no nation can better endure to be splendidly miserable. Wolsey now became a cardinal, grew every day more powerful, and more desirous of power: the pope was sensible of his influence over the king, and therefore created him his legate in England. The pontiff's design was to make him thus instrumental in draining the kingdom of money, upon pretence of employing it in a war against the turks, but, in reality, to fill his own coffers. In this he so well served the court of Rome, that he, some time after, made him legate for life: he was now, therefore, at once, a legate, a cardinal, a bishop, a prime minister, and possessed of numberless church benefices; yet, still unsatisfied, he desired greater promotions. He therefore procured a bull from the pope, impowering him to make knights and counts, to legitimate bastards, to give degrees in arts, law, physic, and divinity, and grant all sorts of dispensations. So much pride and power could not avoid giving high offence to the nobility; yet none dared to vent their indignation, so greatly were they in terror of his vindictive temper. The duke of Buckingham, son

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of him who loſt his life in the reign of Richard III. was the only perſon who had reſolution enough to complain. His threats were ſoon conveyed to Wolſey by an informer, who was not ſlow to accuſe the duke of high-treaſon. The ſubſtance of his impeachment was, that he had conſulted a fortune-teller concerning his ſucceſſion to the crown, and had affected to make himſelf popular. This was but a weak pretext to take away the life of a nobleman, whoſe father had died in defence of the late king: however, he was condemned to die as a traitor. When the ſentence was pronouncing againſt him, and the high ſteward came to mention the word traitor, the unhappy priſoner could no longer contain: *My lords*, cried he to his judges, *I am no traitor*; *and, for what you have now done againſt me, take* my *ſincere forgiveneſs: as for my life, I think it is not worth petitioning for*; *may God forgive you, and pity me!* He was ſoon after executed on Tower hill.

Every juſt man muſt feel the higheſt indignation at ſo unmerited a puniſhment. In the former reign, the few that periſhed under the hand of the executioner were really culpable; but here we ſee a nobleman's life taken away, only for his diſlike of an aſpiring and licentious upſtart. It is this cruelty of puniſhing without guilt, and not the number of executions in a reign, that diſtinguiſhes it into a tyrannical or merciful one. Perhaps there were more executions under Henry VII. than his ſucceſſor; and yet the firſt was a juſt and merciful prince, the latter an arbitrary and mercileſs tyrant.

By this time all the immenſe treaſures of the late king were quite exhauſted on empty pageants, guilty pleaſures, or vain treaties and expeditions. Wolſey was a proper inſtrument to ſupply the king with

with money, which now began to be wanted; this he extorted by the name of a benevolence: Henry minded not by what methods it was raiſed, provided he had but the enjoyment of it. However, his miniſter met ſome oppoſition in his attempts to levy thoſe involuntary contributions: having exacted a conſiderable ſubſidy from the clergy, he next addreſſed himſelf to the houſe of commons, but they only granted half the ſupplies he demanded. The cardinal was highly offended at their parſimony, and deſired to be heard in the houſe; but as this would have deſtroyed the very form and conſtitution of that auguſt body, they replied, that none could be admitted to reaſon there but ſuch as were members. This was the firſt attempt made, in the preſent reign, to render the king maſter of the debates in parliament: Wolſey firſt paved the way, and, unfortunately for the kingdom, the king too well improved upon his deſign.

Wolſey was, ſoon after, raiſed to ſtill greater dignities than before: he was, at once, archbiſhop of York, biſhop of Durham, abbot of St. Alban's, a cardinal, legate for life, lord chancellor of England, prime miniſter, and favourite, and careſſed or feared by all the powers of Europe: he now, therefore, undertook more openly to render the king independent of his parliament, and levied the ſubſidy granted by them for four years, and conſequently to be paid at four different times, all at once. Againſt this the poor, who were the greateſt ſufferers, moſt loudly exclaimed; but he diſregarded their clamours, ſecure in the king's approbation and the pope's protection.

Theſe proceedings only paved the way to ſtill greater extortions: Wolſey was too haughty to be

be refuſed in his demands by the houſe of commons, and determined to levy money upon the king's authority alone. This was deemed a breach of the Magna Charta, and the people abſolutely refuſed to comply. Even a general rebellion threatened to enſue. The king, finding what was likely to be the conſequences of the cardinal's precipitate meaſures, pretended they were carried on without his authority; but, at the ſame time, demanded from the people a benevolence, which was only an artifice to extort money under a different name. The people ſeemed ſenſible of the king's art, and the citizens of London refuſed to give the benevolence demanded: their example was followed by the country, and an univerſal defection ſeemed to prevail. The king, apprehenſive of bad conſequences by perſiſting in his demand, thought proper to retract for this time, and wait a more favourable opportunity of oppreſſion.

You now find the people labouring under a very different form of oppreſſion from that in the reigns preceding Henry VII. In thoſe earlier times their miſeries chiefly aroſe from the licentiouſneſs of the nobility; in this reign they proceeded from the uſurpations of the king. Before Henry VII. had balanced the government, the people often diſcharged their taxes by an inſurrection; but now that the preſent Henry had deſtroyed that balance again, the people were obliged to pay taxes that were not due. In ſhort, they now ſeemed as miſerable as when their great reſtorer had brought them from anarchy; an arbitrary king, an avaricious pope, a revengeful favourite, a luxurious clergy, all conſpired to haraſs them: yet, during this whole reign, there was no rebellion; not from

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the juſtice of the king's adminiſtration, nor from the love the people had to their ſovereign; but happily for the reigning tyrant, he enjoyed the effects of his predeceſſor's prudence, not his own.

LETTER XXX.

AS, in a family, the faults and the impertinence of ſervants are often to be aſcribed to their maſters; ſo, in a ſtate, the vices and the inſolence of favourites ſhould be juſtly attributed to the king who employs them. The pride of Wolſey was great, but his riches were ſtill greater; and, in order to have a pretext for amaſſing ſuch ſums, he undertook to found two new colleges at Oxford, for which he received every day freſh grants from the pope and the king. To execute his ſcheme, he obtained a liberty of ſuppreſſing ſeveral monaſteries, and converting their funds to the benefit of his intended ſcheme. Whatever might have been the pope's inducement to grant him theſe privileges, nothing could be more fatal to the pontiff's intereſts; for Henry was thus himſelf taught to imitate afterwards what he had ſeen a ſubject perform without crime or danger.

Hitherto the adminiſtration of affairs was carried on by Wolſey alone: as for the king, he loſt in the embraces of his miſtreſſes all the complaints of the nation, and the cardinal undertook to keep him ignorant, in order to maintain his own authority. But now a period approached, that was to put an end to this miniſter's exorbitant power: one of the moſt extraordinary and important revolutions that ever employed the attention of man, was now ripe for execution. But, to have a clear idea of this

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grand reformation, it will be proper to take a curſory view of the ſtate of the church at that time, and obſerve by what ſeemingly contradictory means Providence produces the happieſt events. *A. D.* 1517.

The church of Rome had now, for more than a thouſand years, been corrupting the ſacred doctrines of Chriſtianity, and converting into a temporality the kingdom of another world. The popes were frequently found at the head of their own armies, fighting for their dominions with the arm of fleſh, and forgetting, in cruelty and immoral politics, all the pretended ſanctity of their character. They had drained other kingdoms of their treaſures upon the moſt infamous pretexts, and were proud of ſitting at Rome, in their own conduct, an example of refined pleaſure and ſtudied luxury. The cardinals, prelates, and dignitaries of the church, lived and were ſerved like voluptuous princes, and ſome of them were found to poſſeſs eight or nine biſhoprics at a time. Wherever the church governs, it exerts its power with cruelty; and to their luxury theſe great ones added the crime of being tyrants too.

As for the inferior clergy, both popiſh and proteſtant writers exclaim againſt their diſſolute and abandoned morals. They publickly kept miſtreſſes, and bequeathed to their baſtards whatever they were able to ſave from their pleaſures, or extort from the poor. There is ſtill to be ſeen, ſays a fine writer, a will made by a biſhop of Cambray, in which he ſets aſide a certain ſum *for the baſtards he has had already, and thoſe which, by the bleſſing of God, he may yet happen to have.* In many parts of England and Germany the people obliged the prieſts to have concubines, ſo that the laity might keep

keep their wives in greater ſecurity; while the poor laborious peaſant and artizan ſaw all the fruits of their toil go, not to clothe and maintain their own little families, but to pamper men who inſulted and deſpiſed them.

But the vices of the clergy were not greater than their ignorance; few of them knew the meaning of their own Latin maſs: they were chiefly employed in finding out witches, and exorciſing the poſſeſſed. But what moſt increaſed the hatred of the people againſt them, was the ſelling pardons and abſolutions for ſin at a certain ſtated prices. A deacon, or ſubdeacon, who ſhould commit murder, was abſolved from their crime, and allowed to poſſeſs three benefices, upon paying twenty crowns. A biſhop or an abbot might commit murder for ten pounds. Every crime had its ſtated price, and abſolutions were given, not only for ſins already committed, but for ſuch as ſhould be committed hereafter. The wiſeſt of the people looked with ſilent deteſtation on theſe impoſitions, and the ignorant, whom nature ſeemed to have formed for ſlavery, began to open their eyes to ſuch glaring abſurdities.

There aroſe, at laſt, a champion to reſcue human nature from its degeneracy. This was the famous Martin Luther. Leo X. being employed in building the church at St. Peter's at Rome, in the year 1519, in order to procure money for carrying on this project, he gave a commiſſion for ſelling indulgences, or in other words, a deliverance from the pains of purgatory, either for one's ſelf or other friends. There were every where ſhops opened where theſe were ſold; but in general they were to be had at taverns and ſuch like places. Theſe indulgences were granted to the Dominican friars to be diſtributed by them, whereas

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the Auguſtine friars had been in poſſeſſion of the diſtribution of them time out of mind before. Martin Luther was an Auguſtine monk, and one of thoſe who reſented this transferring the ſale of indulgences to another order. He began to ſhew his indignation, by preaching againſt their efficacy: oppoſition ſoon drove him further than he firſt intended to go, and, now the veil was lifted, he proceeded to examine the authority of the pope himſelf. The people, who had long groaned under the papal tyranny, heard his diſcourſes with pleaſure, and defended him againſt the authority and machinations of the church of Rome. Frederic, elector of Saxony, ſurnamed the Wiſe, openly protected him. Luther as openly declaimed againſt the number of ſacraments, reducing the ſeven held by the church of Rome, firſt to three, and afterwards to two: from thence he proceeded to examine the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, to ſhew the folly of ſuppoſing a purgatory, and the dangerous conſequence of celibacy among the clergy.

The pope iſſued out his bulls againſt Luther, and the Dominican friars procured his books to be burned. Luther abuſed the Dominicans, and boldly, in the ſtreets of Wirtemberg, burned the bull of the pope. In the mean time the diſpute was carried on by writings on either ſide: Luther, tho' oppoſed by the pope, the cardinals, and all the body of the clergy, ſupported his cauſe ſingly and with ſucceſs. If indeed we look into his works at this day, we ſhall find them trifling and unſatisfactory enough; but then he had only ignorance to contend with, and, ill as he wrote, they anſwered ſtill worſe. Opinions are inculcated upon the minds of the publick, rather by fortitude and perſeverance, than by ſtrength of reaſoning or beauty

of thought, and no man had more fortitude and more perſeverance than he.

In this diſpute it was the fate of Henry VIII. to be one of the champions. His father, who had given him the education of a ſcholar, permitted him to be inſtructed in ſchool divinity, which then compoſed the learning of the times. He was, therefore, willing to give the world a demonſtration of his abilities in this reſpect, and deſired the pope's permiſſion to read the works of Luther, which had been forbidden to be read under pain of excommunication. Having readily obtained this requeſt, the king defended the ſeven ſacraments, from St. Thomas Aquinas, and ſhewed ſome ſkill in ſchool divinity, though it is thought that Wolſey had the chief hand in directing him. A book being thus finiſhed in haſte, it was ſent to Rome for the pope's approbation: the pope, raviſhed with its eloquence and depth, compared the work to that of St. Auguſtine or St. Jerome, and gave Henry the title of *Defender of the Faith*, little ſuſpecting that Henry was ſoon going to be one of the moſt terrible enemies that ever the church of Rome had yet met with.

Beſides theſe cauſes which contributed to render the Romiſh church odious or contemptible, there were ſtill others proceeding from political motives. Clement VII. had ſucceeded Leo, and, the hereditary animoſity between the emperor and the pope breaking out into a war, Clement was impriſoned in the caſtle of St. Angelo, and, with thirteen cardinals beſide, kept in cuſtody for his ranſom. As the demands of the emperor were exorbitant, Henry undertook to negotiate for the pope, and procured a treaty in his favour; but his holineſs, in the mean time, corrupting his guards,

had

had the good fortune to escape from confinement, and left the treaty unfinished, but sent Henry a letter of thanks for his mediation. The conduct of the emperor shewed Henry that the pope might be injured with impunity; and the behaviour of the pope manifested but little of that sanctity or infallibility to which the pontiffs pretended. Besides, as he had obliged the pope, he supposed that he might, upon any emergency, expect a return of favour.

It was in this situation of the church and of the pope, that a new drama was going to be performed, which was to change the whole system of Europe. Henry had now been married eighteen years to Catharine of Arragon, who had been brought over from Spain to marry his eldest brother, prince Arthur, who died some months after his cohabitation with her. Henry had three children by this lady, one of whom was still living, while she herself was esteemed for her virtue and the gentleness of her disposition. The king thought he felt no real passion, either for the qualifications of her mind or person, yet for a long time broke out into no flagrant contempt: he ranged from beauty to beauty in the court, and his title and authority always procured him a ready compliance from female frailty. It happened at length, that, among the maids of honour that then attended the queen, there was one Anna Bullen, the daughter of a gentleman of distinction, tho' not of the nobility. Her beauty surpassed what had hitherto appeared at his voluptuous court; her features were regular, mild, and attractive; her stature elegant, though below the middle size; while her wit and vivacity even exceeded the allurements of her person. The king, who never restrained one passion which he

desired to gratify, saw, and loved her; but, after several efforts to induce her to comply with his criminal passion, he found that without marriage he could have no hopes of succeeding. This obstacle, therefore, he quickly undertook to remove: his own queen was now become hateful to him; and in order to procure a divorce, he pretended that his conscience rebuked him, for having so long lived in incest with his present queen, formerly his brother's wife. This every person of candour saw was only a pretext to cover his real motive: he himself had eagerly solicited the match with queen Catharine; he had lived with her eighteen years without any scruple, and had the pope's licence for this habitation; but he asserted, that a wounded conscience was his motive, and none of his subjects offered to divulge the real one.

In this perplexity, therefor, he applied to Clement VII. who owed him obligations, and from whom he expected a ready compliance, to dissolve the bull of the former pope, who had given him permission to marry Catharine, and to declare that it was contrary to all laws both divine and human. Clement was now in the utmost perplexity. Queen Catharine was aunt to the emperor who had lately made him a prisoner, and whose resentment he dreaded to rekindle, by thus injuring so near a relation: beside, he could not, in honour, declare the bull of a former pope illicit, for this would be entirely destroying the papal infallibility. On the other hand, Henry was his protector and friend; the dominions of England were his chief resource of his finances; and the king of France, some time before, had got a bill of divorce in somewhat similar circumstances. In this exigence he thought the best method was to spin out the affair by a negotiation;

gotiation; and thus he argued, temporiſed, promiſed, recanted, and diſputed, hoping that the king's paſſion would never hold out during the tedious courſe of an eccleſiaſtical controverſy. In this he was miſtaken; Henry had been taught to argue as well as he, and quickly found, or wreſted, many texts of ſcripture to favour his opinions and his paſſions. To his arguments he added threats, which probably had greater influence: the pope was aſſured, that the Engliſh were already but too much diſpoſed to withdraw their obedience from the holy ſee, and, that, if he continued to refuſe, the whole country would readily follow their monarch's example, and exclude themſelves from his protection. The king even propoſed to his holineſs, whether, if he were denied the putting away his preſent queen, he might not have a diſpenſation to marry two wives at a time? The pope, though his meaſures were already taken not to grant the bull, yet ſtill ſeemed unreſolved, as if waiting for more full and authentic information.

During theſe ſolicitations, on which Henry's happineſs ſeemed to depend, he expected, in his favourite Wolſey, a warm defender, and a ſteady adherent; but in this he was miſtaken. Wolſey ſeemed to be in pretty much ſuch a dilemma as the pope himſelf. On the one hand, he was to pleaſe his maſter the king, from whom he had received a thouſand marks of favour; on the other hand, he could not diſoblige the pope, whoſe ſervant he more immediately was, and who had power to puniſh his diſobedience. In this dilemma, he choſe to ſtand neuter: though, of all mankind, he was the moſt haughty, he on this occaſion gave way in all things to his colleague cardinal Campegio, ſent by the pope from Italy. Wolſey's me-

method of temporiſing highly diſguſted the king, yet he endeavoured to conceal his reſentment: he now only looked out for ſome man of equal abilities and leſs art, and it was not long before accident threw in his way one Thomas Cranmer, of greater abilities than the former, and rather more integrity. Cranmer was a doctor of divinity, and a profeſſor at Cambridge, but had loſt his place upon marrying contrary to the inſtitutes of the canon law, which enjoined him celibacy. He had travelled into Germany, where he read Luther's works, and embraced his doctrine; and, upon his return, was tutor to the ſons of a gentleman, who one night happened to entertain two of the principal men of the court. Cranmer, being aſked his opinion of the king's divorce, which was then the topic of the converſation, delivered himſelf in ſo learned a manner, that the king was ſoon informed of his abilities, and ordered him to follow the court.

The king's reſentment now appeared more openly againſt the cardinal. The attorney-general was ordered to prepare a bill of indictment againſt him, and ſoon after he himſelf was ordered to reſign the great ſeal. Crimes are readily found againſt a man when he is hated, and the cardinal was ſentenced to be excluded from the protection of the laws. As ſoon as he was out-lawed, the king commanded him to retire to a country-houſe, and directed that an inventory of his goods ſhould be taken, which contained immenſe riches, acquired by various methods of guilt and extortion: of fine holland alone there were found in his houſes a thouſand pieces, which may ſerve to give an idea of the reſt of his wealth. The parliament confirmed the ſentence of the courts, and he was ſent an exile to his country-ſeat, there to wait the king's diſpoſal of his

perſon,

perſon, with all the fluctuations of hope and apprehenſion. Still, however, he was left the archbiſhopric of York, and, even ſhattered as his fortunes were, he was reſolved to perform the ceremony of his inſtalment there with a magnificence little ſuitable to his preſent condition; but, while he was preparing to enjoy, in his retreat, thoſe ſplendors which he ever loved, by another unexpected revolution, he was, at the king's command, arreſted by the earl of Northumberland for high treaſon. He at firſt refuſed to comply, as being a cardinal; but, finding the earl bent upon performing his commiſſion, he complied, and ſet out, by eaſy journeys, for London, to appear as a criminal, in a place where formerly he acted as a king. In his way, he ſtayed a fortnight at the earl of Shrewſbury's, where one day at dinner he was taken ill, not without violent ſuſpicion of having poiſoned himſelf: being brought forward from thence, with much difficulty he reached Leiceſter-abbey, where, the monks coming out to receive him, he ſaid, Father abbot, *I* am come to lay my bones among you. As his diſorder increaſed, an officer being placed near his bed-ſide, at once to guard and attend him, he cryed out to him, *O, if I had ſerved my God as I have ſerved my king, he would not thus have forſaken me in adverſity.* He died ſoon after, in all the pangs of repentance and remorſe, and left a life which he had all along rendered turbid by ambition, till he found that all his ambition was but vanity at the laſt. He left two natural children behind him, one of whom being a prieſt, was loaded with church preferments. Henry being thus freed from a perſon whom he conſidered as an obſtacle to his intentions, by the advice of Cranmer, had the legality of his *A. D.* 1530.

preſent marriage canvaſſed in the different univerſities of Europe. It was very extraordinary to ſee the king on one ſide ſoliciting the univerſities to be favourable to his paſſion, and on the other the emperor preſſing them to incline to his aunt: Henry liberally rewarded thoſe doctors who declared in his favour, and the emperor granted benefices to ſuch as voted on his ſide of the debate. Time has diſcovered theſe intrigues. In one of Henry's account-books we find the diſburſements he made upon theſe occaſions: to a deacon he gave a crown, to a ſubdeacon two crowns, and ſo of the reſt, to each in proportion to his conſequence. The perſon who bribed upon theſe occaſions, however, excuſed himſelf by declaring, that he never paid the money till after the vote was given. Henry at length prevailed; his liberalities were greater than thoſe of his rival, as he was moſt intereſted in the ſucceſs of the debate: all the colleges in Italy and France unanimouſly declared his preſent marriage againſt all law, divine and human, and that therefore it was not at firſt in the power of the pope to grant a diſpenſation. The only places where it was moſt warmly oppoſed, were at Cambridge and Oxford: theſe univerſities, it ſeems, had, even then, more freedom and integrity than were to be found elſewhere; but at laſt they alſo concurred in the ſame opinion.

The agents of Henry were not content with the ſuffrages of the univerſities; the opinions of the Rabbis were alſo demanded, but they were eaſily bought up in his favour. Thus fortified, the king was reſolved to oppoſe even the pope himſelf, for his paſſion by no means could brook the delays and ſubterfuges of the holy ſee: being, therefore, ſupported by his clergy, and authorized by the univerſities;

verſities; having ſeen the pope formerly degraded by a lay monarch, and Luther's doctrine followed by thouſands; and yet ſtill further inſtigated by the king of France, he without further diſpenſation, annulled his marriage with queen Catharine, and Cranmer, now become an archbiſhop, pronounced the decree. *A. D.* 1533.

The queen, during this conteſt, always ſupported her rights with reſolution, and yet with modeſty: at length, however, having found the inutility of further reſiſtance, ſhe retired to the country, without once offering to complain: ſhe ſaw the power of her rival, and yielded without murmuring. Anna Bullen had already conſented to marry the king, and even ſhared his bed two months before his marriage with Catharine was diſſolved. Though her prudence and her virtue demanded eſteem in the former parts of her conduct, yet ſhe now for a moment forgot the ties of each, and gave a looſe to her triumph. She paſſed through London with a magnificence greater than had ever been known before; the ſtreets were ſtrewed, the walls were hung, the conduits run with wine, while ſhe and her corpulent lover rode through the city like the heroine and knight of a romance.

In the mean time, the pope now thought himſelf obliged to hold no meaſures with the king: and, being ſo frightened by the menaces of the emperor, publiſhed a ſentence, declaring queen Catharine alone to be Henry's lawful wife, and requiring him to take her again, with a denunciation of cenſures in caſe of refuſal. When Henry received news of the ſentence given againſt him at Rome, he was convinced that no meaſures could be kept with the holy ſee, and therefore no longer delayed to execute his long meditated ſcheme of ſe-

parating entirely from the church of Rome. The parliament was at his devotion; a part of the clergy was for him, as they had already declared againſt the pope, when they had decreed in favour of the divorce; the people were flattered with the expectations of being rid of the burthen of their taxes; and ſuch as were diſpleaſed to ſee Italian biſhops hold Engliſh church preferments, expected their downfal: in ſhort, all things conſpired to co-operate with his deſigns; he, therefore, at once ordered himſelf to be declared by his clergy Head of the Church. The parliament con-

A. D. 1534. firmed this title, and aboliſhed all the authority of the pope in England, the tribute of Peter-pence, and the collation to eccleſiaſtical befices. The people came into the king's project with joy, and took an oath, called the oath of Supremacy: all the credit of the pope, that had ſubſiſted for ages, was now at once overthrown, and few except thoſe who held to the religious houſes, ſeemed diſſatisfied. They who believed that it would have been dangerous to break with the pope, were now convinced that it could be effected with impunity; and it was ſoon perceived, that all authority, which is not ſupported by power, is nothing but an empty name.

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LETTER XXXI.

IN this manner began the reformation in England, and by ſuch ſurpriſing methods Providence brought about its deſigns, as if to mock human ſagacity. Let us now peruſe its progreſs, and follow this capricious monarch through his various projects, cruelties, and inconſiſtencies. The parliament were now entirely dependent upon the king: they had, from the beginning, ſided with him in his ſeparating from the church of Rome, and conſequently were now obliged to comply with all his other meaſures, in order to ſtrengthen the new reformation.

Henry was very ſenſible that the parliament was, even from motives of intereſt, entirely devoted to him, and therefore he was reſolved to make uſe of the opportunity, and render himſelf abſolute. He therefore oppoſed the parliament againſt the monks, and availed himſelf of the hatred which that body incurred by their ſuppreſſion: the parliament at firſt began by examining the abuſes practiſed in monaſteries, and, finding ſome, condemned all: but, while they were employed in ſuppreſſing them, Henry was buſy in deſtroying the power of the ſuppreſſors. This was the origin of the unlimited power he now aſſumed: his parliament at different times, paſſed every ſtatute he thought proper to propoſe, how abſurd ſoever; and many of them were, in fact, marked with the higheſt abſurdities. They teſtified their ſatisfaction not only for what he had done, but alſo for whatever he had intended to do: they enacted, that the ſame obedience ſhould be paid to the king's proclamation as to an

act of parliament, which was deſtroying all their power at one blow; they declared their readineſs to believe, not only what had been directed, but whatever the king ſhould direct, in matters of religion, for the future: but, to crown all, they enacted that the king ſhould not pay his debts, and that ſuch as had been paid by him, ſhould refund the money.

Being thus empowered to act as he thought proper, he went vigorouſly to work in the ſuppreſſion of monaſteries, colleges, and religious houſes. Cambridge and Oxford, without any regard to their antiquity, ſhared the ſame fate with the reſt, and the lectures were for a time diſcontinued, and the revenues confiſcated. To reconcile the people to theſe proceedings, Henry took care to have the counterfeit reliques expoſed the ſcandalous lives of the friars and nuns made public, and all their debaucheries detected. Whatever had ſerved to engage the people in ſuperſtition, was publickly burnt; but what grieved the people moſt to ſee were the bones of Thomas Becket, the ſaint of Canterbury, burnt in public, and his rich ſhrine, in which there was a diamond of great value, confiſcated among the common plunder. The people looked on with ſilent horror, afraid to rebel, equally deteſting the vices of the monks and the impiety of the king.

But though the king had entirely ſeparated himſelf from Rome, yet he was by no means willing to be a follower of Luther. The invocation of ſaints was not yet aboliſhed by him, but only reſtrained: he ordered the bible to be tranſlated into the vulgar tongue, but not put into the hands of the laity. It was a capital crime to believe in the pope's ſupremacy,

macy, and yet equally heinous to be of the reformed religion, as practiſed in Germany. His opinions in religion were delivered in a law, which, from its horrid conſequences, was termed the *Bloody Statute*; by which it was ordained, that whoever by word or writing denied tranſubſtantiation, that whoever maintained that the communion in both kinds was neceſſary, or that it was lawful for prieſts to marry, or that vows of chaſtity could innocently be broken, or that private maſſes were unprofitable, or that articular confeſſion was unneceſſary, ſhould be burnt or hanged as the court ſhould determine.

The kingdom, at that time, was, in ſome meaſure, divided between the followers of Luther and the adherents to the pope: this ſtatute with Henry's former decrees, in ſome meaſure excluded both, and therefore opened a wide field for perſecution.

Theſe perſecutions, however, were preceeded by one of a different nature, ariſing neither from religious nor political cauſes, but tyranical caprice. Anna Bullen, his queen, was herſelf of the Lutheran perſuaſion, and had ſcarcely favoured that party: theſe attachments ſoon created her enemies, who only waited ſome favourable occaſion to deſtroy her credit with the king; and that occaſion preſented itſelf but too ſoon. The king's paſſion was, by this time, quite exhauſted; the only deſire he ever had for her was that brutal appetite which enjoyment ſoon deſtroys: he was fallen in love, if we may call it love, once more, with Jane Seymour, a maid of honour to the queen.

As ſoon as the queen's enemies perceived the king's diſguſt, they ſoon gave him an opportunity to gratify his inclinations, by accuſing her of ſundry intrigues with her domeſtics; which accuſation

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was eagerly caught up by the king. All his paſſions were in extreme; he immediately flew to parliament, and had her accuſed of adultery and inceſt with her own brother. This parliament, who had long ſhewn themſelves the timid miniſters of all his paſſions condemned the queen and her brother, without ever knowing on what foundation the ſentence was grounded.

Her brother, lord Rochfort, was beheaded, though there was not the leaſt proof of his guilt: one Norris and Brereton were hanged for only having paid her ſuch compliments, as would now merely paſs for gallantry and innocent amuſement: Smeton, a muſician, was compelled to acknowledge his having received favours from her, and he was then hanged without an opportunity of being confronted by the queen.

Upon ſuch ſlight ſuſpicions was this unhappy queen ſent to the Tower, in order to wait the execution of her ſentence. She who had been once the envied object of royal favour, was now going to give a new inſtance of the capriciouſneſs of fortune: ſhe was ever of a chearful diſpoſition, and her eaſy levities, perhaps, diſguſted the gloomy tyrant. She had diſtributed in the laſt year of her life, not leſs than fifteen thouſand pounds among the poor, and was at once their protector and darling. Upon being conducted to her priſon, ſhe ſat down to addreſs the king, by letter, for mercy, in this ſhe inſiſted upon her innocence in the ſtrongeſt terms: *You have raiſed me*, ſaid ſhe, *from privacy to make me a lady; from a lady you made me a counteſs; from a counteſs to a queen; and from a queen I ſhall ſhortly become a ſaint.* On the morning of her execution, ſhe ſent for Mr. Kingſton, the keeper of the Tower, to whom, upon entering

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the priſon, ſhe ſaid, *Mr. Kingſton, I hear I am not to die till noon, and I am ſorry for it, for I thought to be dead before this time, and free from a life of pain.* The keeper attempting to comfort her, by aſſuring her the pain would be very little, ſhe replied, *I have heard the executioner is very expert, and* (claſping her neck with her hands, laughing) *I have but a little neck.* Kingſton, who gives this account, continues to obſerve, that he had ſeen many men and women executed, but never one whoſe fortitude was equal to hers. She was beheaded ſoon after, *A. D.* 1536. May 19, behaving with the utmoſt decency and reſolution.

Anna Bullen ſeemed to be guilty of no other crime than that of having ſurvived the king's affections: many crowned heads had already been put to death in England, but this was the firſt royal execution upon a ſcaffold. Henry ordered his parliament to give him a divorce, between her ſentence and execution, thus to baſtardize Elizabeth, the only child he had by her, as he had already baſtardized Mary, his only child by queen Catharine.

The very next day after her execution he married Jane Seymour, who died the year following, after having heen delivered of a ſon.

In the mean time the fires in Smithfield began to blaze: thoſe who adhered to the pope, or thoſe who followed Luther, were equally the objects of royal vengeance and eccleſiaſtical perſecution. Thomas Cromwell, raiſed by the king's caprice from a blackſmith's ſon to be a royal favourite (for tyrants ever raiſe their favourites from the loweſt of the people) and Cranmer, now become archbiſhop of Canterbury, with all their might aſſiſted the reformation: biſhop Gardiner, and the duke of Nor-

Norfolk, on the other hand, were for leading the king back to his former ſuperſtitions, with every art, and Cromwell fell a ſacrifice to their intrigues; but the duke and biſhop did not ſucceed. Unhappily for his ſubjects, the king became an equal perſecutor of the two religions propoſed for his acceptance.

It was now that England ſaw a ſpectacle to ſtrike the boldeſt with horror; a company of people condemned and executed all together, ſome for being ſtedfaſt to the pope, and others for adhering to Luther: among this number were Dr. Robert Barnes, Thomas Gerrard, and William Jerom, for being Lutherans; Buttolph, Daneplifs, Philpot, and Brinholm, for continuing to acknowledge the pope. Theſe were all burnt together, without ever being permitted to plead their own cauſe, or even to know their crimes or their accuſers. The people in the North, indeed, during theſe times of cruelty, ventured to riſe in rebellion; but by the means of the duke of Norfolk they were ſoon brought to ſubmiſſion.

During theſe tranſactions, Henry contracted a new marriage with Anne of Cleves, *A. D.* 1540. being induced by her picture, in which it ſeems the painter had flattered her. He found her very different from what his paſſion had expected, but married her from political motives. He could not, however, long bear the uneaſineſs of being married for life, to a woman whoſe corpulence, it ſeems, gave him diſguſt; he therefore reſolved to have once more a divorce from his parliament, which he found it no difficult matter to obtain. Among other reaſons to cancel his eſpouſals, he declared, that he had not given an inward conſent to the marriage, without which it was affirmed that his

promiſes

promiſes could not be obligatory: he added, that, as he was reſolved not to conſummate the marriage, and to have legitimate iſſue, ſo it was proper to give him a queen by whom he might accompliſh theſe intentions. Theſe reaſons were thought good; virtue and juſtice had been long baniſhed from the ſervile parliament.

He took, for a fifth wife, Catharine Howard, the duke of Norfolk's niece: in this match he ſeemed to be perfectly happy, and even ordered his confeſſor to draw up a particular form of thankſgiving for the bleſſings he enjoyed in a faithful wife. The queen, it ſeems, pretended to the ſame affection for him; but, alas! his amiable days were long over; he was now almoſt choaked with fat, and had contracted a moroſe air, very improper for inſpiring affection. The queen had actually committed thoſe lewdneſſes before marriage, of which Anna Bullen had formerly been falſely accuſed; but theſe crimes did by no means deſerve death, nor even a divorce, ſince her fidelity to him after marriage was all that the moſt ſcrupulous delicacy could require: Henry, however, conſidered her former inconſtancy as a capital offence; and, not yet ſatiated with blood, this queen was executed on Tower-hill. *Feb.* 13, 1542.

All this was terrible, but ſtill the king was reſolved to be peculiarly cruel: though branded with three divorces, and ſtained with the blood of two wives, he ordered a law to be enacted, equally remarkable for its abſurdity and impoſſibility, namely, *That, whatever perſon knew of the intrigues of a queen, ſhould reveal it on pain of high treaſon; or if any woman, not a virgin, ſhould preſume to marry the king of England, ſhe ſhould be guilty of high treaſon!* One would think that it were impoſſible to procure a body

body of men capable of giving ſanction to ſuch inſcrutable abſurdities, and yet lay claim to reaſon. It was pleaſantly ſaid (for even thoſe times of ſlaughter could not ſuppreſs ridicule) that the king, according to that ſtatute, could only marry a widow. His next and laſt wife actually was a widow, Catharine Parr, widow of lord Latimer, and ſhe was a favourer of the reformation.

A. D. 1543.

She was, however, to proceed with great caution: the king prided himſelf much on his ſkill in theology, and it might be fatal to diſpute with him upon religion, as ſhe had ſeen in the caſe of one Lambert, ſome time before. It ſeems this man had denied tranſubſtantiation, which Henry had ordered to be believed: the king, hearing that he was to be tried at Weſtminſter for this offence, which was capital, undertook, himſelf, to diſpute the point with him in public. Letters were written to many of the biſhops and nobility to be preſent upon this extraordinary occaſion; and, on the day prefixed, there was a great concourſe in the hall. Lambert ſtood alone without a ſecond; the king was ſurrounded with a crowd of flatterers, who applauded all he ſaid, and averred that his arguments were invincible; they extolled him above all the divines of the age, and at once confirmed his pride and his prejudices. The reſult of the argument was, that Lambert had his choice, either to abjure his opinions, or to be burnt as an obſtinate heretick. Lambert choſe to die rather than forego what he had conſidered as the truth, and the ſentence was ſoon after executed in Smithfield. When his legs and thighs were burnt off, there not being fire enough to conſume the reſt, two of the officers, raiſing his body up with

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their halberts, puſhed it into the flames, where it was ſoon conſumed to aſhes.

It was not without reaſon, therefore, that the preſent queen concealed her ſentiments, and behaved with caution; upon this account ſhe durſt not intercede for three proteſtants, who were burnt at Windſor juſt after her marriage: ſhe once, indeed, attempted to argue with the king, but it had like to have coſt her her life; wherefore, afterwards, ſhe ſuffered the divines on each ſide to diſpute, and the executioner to deſtroy. During theſe tranſactions the king would frequently aſſemble the houſes of parliament, and harangue them with florid orations, in which he would ever, that never prince had a greater affection for his people, or was more beloved by them. In every pauſe of his diſcourſe, ſome of his creatures, near his perſon, would begin to applaud; and this was followed by loud acclamations from the reſt of the audience.

It is, indeed, aſtoniſhing, to what a pitch of cruelty he attained, and to what a ſtate of ſervility his people: I can account for either in no other manner, than that religious diſputes had now ſo divided the people, and ſet one againſt the other, that the king, availing himſelf of the univerſal weakneſs which was produced by univerſal diſſentions, became the tyrant of all.

But nature, at laſt, ſeemed kindly willing to rid the world of a monſter that man was unable to deſtroy. Henry had been troubled, for ſome time, with a diſorder in his leg, which was now grown very painful: this, added to his monſtrous corpulency, which rendered him unable to ſtir, made him more furious than a chained lion: he became froward and untractable; none dared to approach

him

him without trembling. He had been ever ſtern and ſevere, he was now outrageous: flattery had corrupted all his ſenſes; he deemed it an unpardonable crime to controvert thoſe opinions which he himſelf was changing every hour. His courtiers, contending among themſelves, and conſpiring the death of each other, had no inclination to make an enemy of him. Thus he continued, for four years, the terror of all, and the tormentor of himſelf. At length his end approached; he perceived that he had not long to live, his fat increaſing, and his leg growing worſe. He had already ſlaughtered ſeveral favourites, raiſed from obſcure ſtations to ſhare his dignities and his cruelty; More, Fiſher, Cromwell, and others, died upon the ſcaffold, and Wolſey prevented it by his own death: he was reſolved to make one victim more before he left the world, and that was the duke of Norfolk, who had formerly ſuppreſſed a rebellion excited againſt him, and who had, all along, been the vigilant miniſter of his commands. This nobleman had, outwardly, complied with the reformation, but, in his heart, favoured the pope: the king knew this, and only wanted a pretext to put him and his ſon, the earl of Surry, to death. It was no difficult matter to find one: the ſon had uſed the arms of Edward the confeſſor in his eſcutcheon, and the father had left a blank ſpace in his own where they might be inſerted. This was all the crime alledged againſt them, but it was ſufficient when the king gave his opinion that it was his will they ſhould die. The earl of Surry was beheaded upon Tower-hill, and a warrant was ſent to the Lieutenant of the Tower to cut off the duke of Norfolk's head in two days: this ſentence was juſt upon the point of being executed, when

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the king's own death gave him an unexpected reprieve. Henry had been ſuffered to languiſh without any of his domeſtics having the courage to warn him of his approaching end; they who had ever come near him with trembling, now dreaded to give him this friendly admonition. At length Sir Anthony Denny had the charity to inform him of his ſituation: he thanked this courtier for his friendly admonition, and ſoon after expired, full of ſorrow for his former guilt, and with all the horrors of approaching diſſolution.

Some ſovereigns have been tyrants from contraction and revolt, ſome from being miſled by favourites, and ſome from a ſpirit of party; but Henry was cruel from diſpoſition alone, cruel in the government, cruel in religion, and cruel in his family; yet, tyrant as he was, he died peaceably a natural death, while Henry VI. the moſt harmleſs of all monarchs, was dethroned, impriſoned, and aſſaſſinated. It is a folly and a wickedneſs to ſay, that good or bad actions are their own recompenſe here: true is the doctrine of holy writ; The wicked have their good things in this life, the virtuous muſt look for them in another.

Our divines have taken much pains to vindicate the character of this vicious prince, as if his conduct and our reformation were, in fact, united: nothing can be more abſurd than this, as if the moſt noble deſigns were not often brought about by the moſt vicious inſtruments; we ſee even the cruelty and injuſtice of man employed in our holy redemption.

LETTER XXXII.

THE alterations, in the reign of Henry, were rather ſeparations from the pope, than a reformation of religious abuſes: in the reign of his ſucceſſor Edward VI. his ſon by Jane Seymour, and heir to the crown, the errors of Rome, in reality, began to be reformed. This prince was but nine years old when he aſcended the throne of his father, and the hiſtory of his government is rather a detail of the methods purſued by his governors to reform the abuſes of religion, than a ſeries of politics or war; and their characters, rather than his, ſhould be the object of the hiſtorian's reſearch.

A. D. 1546.

The duke of Somerſet was made protector of the minority, and thus engroſſed the whole adminiſtration; the reſt of the council, which were joined with him, either ſided with his views, or ineffectually oppoſed them. To ſtrengthen his power he marched againſt the Scots who had invaded England, which was their conſtant practice whenever they ſaw the country employed in faction and diſpute: a ſlight victory, gained by him upon this occaſion, acquired him popularity and power. I have more than once remarked, that, to have gained the hearts of the Engliſh, it was requiſite to be a conqueror. But to this character Somerſet added virtues of a much more amiable kind: he was humble, civil, affable, courteous to the meaneſt ſuitor, and all the actions of his life were directed by motives of religion and honour: he, at the ſame time, had learned to look with contempt and deteſtation on the errors and corruptions of the church of

Rome,

Rome, and was conſequently the warm friend of archbiſhop Cranmer, who now undertook to make a real reformation, which Henry VIII. only pretended to do.

You have ſeen, in Henry's reign, that the only alterations he made in religion, were ſuch as either favoured his paſſions, or increaſed his power. Thus all his ſubjects were under a peculiar reſtraint, which upon his death was no longer continued; each took the liberty of ſpeaking his thoughts upon religion, though the laws of the laſt reign were ſtill in force. In this diviſion of opinions, as it may eaſily be ſuppoſed, the reformers prevailed, for they had the protector of their party: to that end, therefore, they procured a general viſitation of churches, and reformed numberleſs abuſes that were almoſt held ſacred by preſcription. It was left to people's choice to go to confeſſion, which had hitherto been deemed an indiſpenſable duty, or to neglect that practice. It was ordered, that all images ſhould be taken out of churches, prieſts were allowed to marry, the old maſs was aboliſhed, and a new liturgy drawn up, which retrenched ſeveral abuſes in the ſervice of the church, and which is the ſame with that now uſed, bating a few alterations.

Theſe reformations were evidently calculated for the benefit of the ſubject; but ſtill the popiſh clergy, who either were expelled their monaſteries, or had refuſed to conform, ſtirred up the people to riſe in rebellion againſt them. We may judge from the number of places in which inſurrections were made, that thoſe reformations were by no means received with univerſal ſatisfaction. There were, at once, inſurrections in Wiltſhire, Suſſex, Hampſhire, Kent, Glouceſterſhire, Suffolk, Warwickſhire, Eſſex, Hertfordſhire, Leiceſterſhire,

terſhire, Rutlandſhire, and Worceſterſhire; and the flames of war were rekindling through the whole kingdom. The protector, who both by principle and intereſt was friend to the populace, did every thing to redreſs their grievances, and by that means ſtopped their fury for a while. In fact, they had ſeveral complaints that were founded in juſtice: the nobility were become poſſeſſors of the forfeit lands which belonged to the clergy, and inſtead of leaving them to be cultivated by the poor, as formerly, incloſed them for the purpoſes of pleaſure and magnificence. This neceſſarily drove numbers, beſides the dejected friars, to the utmoſt ſtraits; but, to add to their misfortunes, an act was paſſed againſt them, the moſt ſevere that had hitherto been known in England: it was enacted, that, if any perſon ſhould loiter, without offering himſelf to work, for three days together, he ſhall be adjudged a ſlave for two years to the firſt informer, and ſhould be marked on the breaſt with the letter V, or *vagabond*, imprinted with an hot iron. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there ſhould be a general inſurrection of the people, when ſuffering ſuch ſevere oppreſſions.

But all the protector's promiſes and endeavours could not effectually redreſs their grievances; he therefore was obliged to have recourſe to violence. Theſe were not the compact bodies of men that we have ſeen in former rebellions, headed by ſome diſcontented or ambitious courtier, and led on with conduct and ſucceſs; Henry VII. had effectually ſuppreſſed all ſuch; theſe were now only a tumultuous rabble, without arms and without diſcipline, led on by ſome obſcure deſperado; unreaſonable in their demands, and divided among

each

each other: the unhappy wretches were therefore eaſily overthrown; above a thouſand of them were ſlain near Exeter by lord Ruſſel, and two thouſand more near Norwich by the earl of Warwick.

The kingdom was now again inclining to an ariſtocracy: the nobility, by the late increaſe of their poſſeſſions, were grown powerful, and oppreſſed the people at pleaſure. They now began to find, that they had a ſeparate intereſt from that of the commons, and conſpired to carry on their power by union among themſelves, while the reſt of the kingdom was divided. The duke of Somerſet, however, oppoſed this project, as he was ever a favourer of the people; and it was incumbent therefore to deſtroy his power before they could eſtabliſh their own. With this view, they placed the earl of Warwick, afterwards made duke of Northumberland, at their head, and began by ſpreading reports to deſtroy the protector's reputation; they next won over the common council of London to favour their projects, and laſtly had him accuſed of high treaſon. The intereſt of the protector was overpowered by that of his rival: he was condemned, and loſt his head upon Tower-hill. *A. D.* 1550.

In all this ſtruggle for power, the young king, by reaſon of his age, was barely paſſive: he was only made the executor of the reſentment and ambition of the contending miniſters, as either happened to prevail; and at one time ſigned the order for execution on this ſide, at another time on that, but ever with tears in his eyes. A tenderneſs of diſpoſition was one of the amiable youth's conſpicuous qualities: to theſe were added a ſagacity far ſurpaſſing his years, and learning that amazed all ſuch as happened to converſe with him. When

the dignity of the throne was to be ſupported, he behaved like a man; and, at other times, was gentle and affable as became his age. In ſhort, he had ſuch great qualities, or was ſaid to have ſuch, that mankind had reaſon to lament his ſhort continuance among them. It is very probable, however, that flattery would have contributed to deſtroy thoſe talents, as it had thoſe of his father; for few princes, except his father, had received more flattery than he.

A. D. 1553. He died of a defluxion upon his lungs, his death being haſtened by medicines given by a woman who confidently pretended ſhe could cure him. His death made way for another ſcene of horrid barbarity, in which the kingdom was to be ruled by a weak and bigotted woman, who was herſelf ruled by mercileſs prieſts, who received their orders from the court of Rome.

LETTER XXXIII.

YOU have hitherto ſeen the ſucceſſion to the throne of England, partly obtained by lineal deſcent, and partly by the aptitude for government in the perſon choſen: neither wholly hereditary, nor quite elective, it has ever made anceſtry the pretext of right, but, in fact, the conſent of the people ſued for the ſupport of theſe pretenſions. And this is the beſt ſpecies of ſucceſſion that can be conceived: it prevents that ariſtocracy, which is ever the reſult of a government entirely elective; and that tyranny which is too often eſtabliſhed where there is never an infringement upon hereditary claims.

Whenever a monarch of England happened to be arbitrary, he general y conſidered the kingdom as his property, and not himſelf as a ſervant of

the kingdom. In ſuch caſes it was natural for him, at his deceaſe, to bequeath his dominions as he thought proper. Henry, in conformity to this practice, made a will, in which he ſettled the ſucceſſion merely according to his uſual caprice: Edward VI. was firſt nominated to ſucceed him, whoſe reign you have juſt ſeen; then Mary, his eldeſt daughter by Catharine of Spain, but with a mark of ſpecial condeſcenſion, by which he would intimate her illegitimacy; the next that followed was Elizabeth, his daughter by Anna Bullen, with the ſame marks of her not being legitimate: after his own children his ſiſter's children were mentioned; his youngeſt ſiſter the ducheſs of Suffolk's iſſue were preferred before his elder ſiſter the queen of Scotland's, which preference was thought by all to be neither founded in juſtice nor ſupported by reaſon.

Edward VI. as has been ſeen, ſucceeded him. He alſo made a will, in which he gave the kingdom away from Mary and Elizabeth to the ducheſs of Suffolk's daughter, the lady Jane Grey, a girl of ſixteen. By theſe diſpoſitions there were, after the death of young Edward, no leſs than four princeſſes who could lay claim to the crown: Mary, who was firſt upon the will, had been declared illegitimate by parliament, and that act was never repealed; the ſame could be alledged againſt Elizabeth, but ſhe had another foundation by being reſtored to her rights in her father's reign: the queen of Scotland, deſcended from Henry's eldeſt ſiſter, could plead the illegitimacy of his two daughters; and Jane Grey might alleged the will of the laſt king in her favour.

In the laſt reign the earl of Warwick was remarkable for ſuppreſſing an inſurrection of the people, and afterwards for being a favourite of the

king, then made duke of Northumberland, next for overturning the duke of Somerſet, his rival, and at length for purſuing the meaſures of the man whom he had deſtroyed; he now began to conceive hopes of ſecuring the crown in his own family, and with this view matched the lord Guilford Dudley, his ſon, with lady Jane Grey, whom by his intereſt he hoped to ſettle on the throne. He was hated by the people for his cruelties, as much as the young lady was loved for her virtues; and this was the greateſt obſtacle to his deſign. I have been more prolix than uſual upon this topic of the ſucceſſion, but you ſhould attend to it with care, in order to have a clear idea of the preſent and the ſucceeding reigns.

Immediately upon the death of the young king, but two competitors put up for the crown: Mary, relying upon the juſtice of her pretenſions; and Jane Grey, ſupported by the duke of Northumberland, her father-in-law. Mary was ſtrongly bigotted to the popiſh ſuperſtitions: having been bred up in reſtraint, ſhe was reſerved and gloomy: ſhe had, even during the life of her father, the reſolution to maintain her ſentiments and ceremonies, and refuſed to comply with his new inſtitutions: her zeal had rendered her cruel, and ſhe was not only blindly attached to her religious opinions, but even to the popiſh clergy who maintained them. On the other hand, Jane Grey was attached to the reformers: though yet but ſixteen, her judgment had attained ſuch a degree of perfection as few enjoy in their more advanced age. All hiſtorians agree, that the ſolidity of her underſtanding, improved by continual application, rendered her the wonder of her age. Aſcham, tutor to Elizabeth, informs us, that, coming once to wait upon her at her father's houſe in Leiceſterſhire,

ſhire, he found her reading Plato's works in Greek, when all the reſt of the family were hunting in the park. He ſeemed ſurpriſed at her being the only perſon abſent from the diverſions abroad, but ſhe aſſured him, *that Plato was an higher amuſement to her than the moſt ſtudied refinements of ſenſual pleaſure.* It was philoſophy, and not ambition, for which ſhe ſeemed born: when her ambitious father-in-law came to inform her of her advancement to the throne, ſhe heard the news with ſorrow, and accepted the proffered honour with reluctance. However, the intreaties of her friends, and the authority of her huſband, at length reconciled her to her fortune: ſhe was removed to the Tower, and ſoon after proclaimed at London, while the people ſhewed few of thoſe marks of ſatisfaction which uſually accompany a ceremony of this kind.

Jane was proclaimed by the council, but the people were for Mary: the men of Suffolk roſe in her favour, Norfolk ſoon joined her, and lord Haſtings, with four thouſand men, which were raiſed to oppoſe her, revolted to her ſide. It was in vain that the duke of Northumberland attempted to lead his army againſt them: his ſoldiers deſerted on the march; he found himſelf abandoned; and ſoon after the council itſelf, which he once governed, now freed from reſtraint, declared againſt him. Jane, who had but juſt been crowned, now ſaw herſelf ſtripped of her dignities, and, without any reluctance, laid down an honour which ſhe was at firſt compelled to accept, and which ſhe held but nine days. Her father, the duke of Suffolk, delivered up the Tower, of which he had the command; and her father-in-law, the duke of Northumberland, being prevented from flying out of the kingdom, pretended to

July 10, 1553.

be pleaſed at Mary's ſucceſs, and was the firſt to fling up his cap when ſhe was proclaimed in Cambridge.

Mary now entered London, and, without the leaſt effuſion of blood, ſaw herſelf joyfully proclaimed, and peaceably ſettled on the throne. This was a juncture that ſeemed favourable to Britiſh happineſs and liberty; a queen, whoſe rights were the moſt equitable, in ſome meaſure elected by the people; the ariſtocracy of the laſt reign almoſt wholly ſuppreſſed; the houſe of commons, by this means, reinſtated in their former authority; the pride of the clergy humbled, and their vices detected; together with peace abroad, and almoſt unanimity at home. This was the flattering proſpect upon Mary's acceſſion, but ſoon this pleaſing phantom was diſſolved: Mary was cruel, and a bigot; ſhe gave back their former power to her clergy, and the kingdom was, once more, involved in the horrors from whence it had lately been extricated.

The queen had promiſed to the men of Suffolk, who firſt declared in her favour, that ſhe would ſuffer religion to remain in the ſituation in which ſhe found it. This promiſe, however, ſhe by no means intended to perform. Political cruelty ever precedes religious: ſhe had reſolved on a change of religion: but, before ſhe perſecuted heretics, who were as yet her friends, it was neceſſary to get rid of ſome of the late council, who were, in reality, her enemies. The duke of Northumberland was the firſt object of royal vengeance; and not indeed without reaſon. It is inſtructive enough to obſerve the viciſſitudes of fortune: the duke of Norfolk was now taken from his priſon in the Tower, to ſit as judge upon the duke of Northumberland,

berland, who had kept him there. The accuſed made a very ſkilful defence, but what could that avail in a court predetermined to condemn him? He was capitally convicted, and ſoon after executed; Sir John Gates, and Sir Thomas Palmer, who had aſſiſted in his projects, ſharing in his puniſhment.

While theſe were falling as victims to their ambition, the queen's miniſters were, in the mean time, carrying on a negotiation of marriage between her and Phillip, king of Spain. The people thought they ſaw that this would be a fatal blow to their liberties, and therefore loudly murmured againſt it; but when they found the treaty actually concluded, they could no longer contain. Sir Thomas Wyat, a Roman catholic, at the head of four thouſand inſurgents, marched from Kent to Hyde-Park, and entered the city in hopes of ſecuring the Tower: but his raſhneſs undid him; as he paſſed through the narrow ſtreets, care was taken by the earl of Pembroke, to block up the way behind him, by fortifications thrown acroſs the ſtreets, and guards were placed at all the avenues to prevent his return. This unhappy man paſſed boldly forward, and was now ready to reap the fruits of his undertaking, when, to his aſtoniſhment, he found that he could neither proceed nor yet make a good retreat. He now, too late, perceived his own temerity, and, loſing all courage in the exigency, he ſurrendered at diſcretion. In the mean time, the duke of Suffolk had endeavoured to foment the inſurrection, but without ſucceſs; he was taken priſoner alſo, and deſtined for the common ſlaughter. Accordingly, Wyat, the duke of Suffolk, Sir John Throgmorton, and fifty-

eight more were executed; but what raiſed the compaſſion of the people moſt of all, was the execution of lady Jane Grey and her huſband Guilford Dudley, who were involved in this calamity.

Two days after Wyat was taken, lady Jane and her huſband were ordered to prepare for death: lady Jane, who had long before ſeen the threatened blow, was no ways ſurpriſed at the meſſage, but bore it with heroic reſolution; and, being informed that ſhe had three days to prepare for death, ſhe ſeemed diſpleaſed at ſo long a delay. Guilford Dudley was the firſt that ſuffered. As the lady was conducted to execution, the officers of the Tower met her on the way, bearing the headleſs body of her huſband, ſtreaming with blood, in order to be interred in the chapel in the Tower: ſhe looked on the corpſe without trembling, and only, with a ſigh, deſired to proceed. She teſtified, to the laſt moment of her ſufferings, great conſtancy, great piety, and an immoveable adherence to the reformation. This was the third queen who died by the hands of the executioner in England.

The enemies of the ſtate being thus ſuppreſſed, the theatre was now opened for the pretended enemies of religion. The queen was freed from all apprehenſions of an inſurrection, and therefore began by aſſembling a corrupt parliament, which was to countenance her future cruelties. The nobility, whoſe only religion ſeemed that of the prince who governed, were eaſily gained over, and the houſe of commons ſeemed paſſive in all her proceedings. She began by giving orders for the ſuppreſſion of all married biſhops and prieſts; the maſs was directed to be reſtored; the pope's authority was re-eſtabliſhed, with ſome reſtrictions;

the

the laws againſt heretics were renewed; and the church and its privileges put upon the ſame foundation in which they were before the alteration of Henry VIII.

This was kindling up the fires of perſecution a new: at the head of theſe meaſures were Gardiner, biſhop of Wincheſter, and Bonner, biſhop of London. Poole, the pope's legate, a great part of whoſe life was ſpent in Italy, ſeemed too much civilized in that country, then the moſt polite in Europe, to be acceſſary to the meaſures now purſued. Gardiner began this bloody ſcene with Hooper and Rogers: Hooper had been biſhop of Glouceſter; Rogers was a clergyman who had ſhone amongſt the moſt diſtinguiſhed of the proteſtants. He was prebendary of St. Paul's, and refuſed all ſubmiſſion to the church of Rome, which he looked upon as antichriſtian. They were condemned by commiſſioners appointed *A. D.* 1555. by the queen, with the chancellor at the head of them. Rogers ſuffered in Smithfield. When he was brought to the ſtake, he had it in his power to ſave himſelf, by recanting his opinions; but neither hopes nor fears could prevail upon him to deſert his religion. When the faggots were placed around him, he ſeemed no way daunted at the preparation, but cried out, *I reſign my life with joy, in teſtimony of the doctrine of Jeſus.* Hooper had his pardon offered him upon the ſame terms, but he refuſed it with equal indignation. This old martyr, who was executed at Glouceſter, was three quarters of an hour in torment; the fire, either from malice or neglect, had not been ſufficiently kindled, ſo that his legs and thighs were firſt burnt, and one of his hands droped off before he expired.

Saunders and Taylor, two other clergymen, whoſe zeal had been diſtinguiſhed in carrying on the reformation, were the next that ſuffered. Taylor was put into a pitch barrel, and, before the fire was kindled, a faggot from an unknown hand was thrown at his head, which made it ſtream with blood: ſtill, however, he continued undaunted, ſinging the xxxiſt pſalm in Engliſh, which one of the ſpectators obſerving, hit him a blow on the ſide of the head, and commanded him to pray in Latin: he then continued a few minutes ſilent, only with his eyes ſtedfaſtly fixed upon heaven, when one of the guards, either through impatience or compaſſion, ſtruck him down with his halbert, and thus delivered him from a world of pain to a life of immortal happineſs.

The death of theſe only ſerved to increaſe the ſavage appetite of the monks and popiſh biſhops for freſh ſlaughter. Bonner, bloated at once with rage and luxury, let looſe his vengeance without reſtraint; while the queen, by letters, exhorted him to purſue the pious work without pity or interruption: and now Ridley, biſhop of London, and the venerable Latimer, biſhop of Worceſter, were to receive the martyr's crown. Ridley was one of the ableſt champions of the reformation; his piety, learning, and ſolidity of judgment, were admired by his friends and dreaded by his enemies. The night before his execution he invited the mayor of Oxford and his wife to ſee him die; and, when he ſaw them melted into tears, he himſelf appeared quite unmoved, heaven being his ſecret ſupporter and comforter in this hour of agony. When he came to the ſtake where he was to be burnt, he found his old friend Latimer there before

fore him, and began to comfort him in his ſufferings, while Latimer was as ready to return the kind office. A furious biggot aſcended to preach to them, before the execution of their ſentence: Ridley gave a ſerious attention to the ſermon, and offered to anſwer it, but this he was not allowed to do. At length the fire was ſet to the pile; Latimer was ſoon out of pain, but Ridley continued much longer, his legs being conſumed before the fire reached his vitals.

Cranmer, whom you have ſeen already ſo zealous in the reformation, was the next perſonage of note that was burnt: he had this peculiar aggravation of his calamity, *A. D.* 1556. that he was prevailed upon to abjure his principles, and ſign his recantation, by the hopes of pardon. Being notwithſtanding this, brought to the ſtake, his confuſion and ſhame were there inexpreſſible: there he retracted all that their falſe promiſes had made him abjure; and reſolving that the hand which had ſigned ſhould firſt ſuffer, he held it out, with an intripid countenance, in the flames, till it dropped off, frequently crying out, in the midſt of his agony, *that unworthy hand!*

Bonner ſeemed now ſatisfied, not with ſingle deaths, but ſent men in whole companies to the flames; women themſelves were not ſpared. But the cruelty went yet further: a woman, condemned for hereſy, was delivered of a child in the midſt of the flames; ſome of the ſpectators humanely ſnatched it out; the magiſtrate, who was a papiſt, ordered it to be flung in again, and it was there conſumed with the mother. The perpetrators of ſuch actions were no longer human; they muſt have forfeited all pretenſions to the name, for hell itſelf could be guilty of nothing more atrocious!

But they were not content with punishing the living alone, their vengeance extended even to the dead: Bucer and Fagius, two German divines, who had been dead some years before, were cited, very formally to appear and give an account of their faith; in default of their appearance, their bodies were taken from their graves, and being hung upon a gallows were consumed to ashes. The wife of Peter Martyr, who himself had the prudence to escape, was dug up like the former, and buried in a dung-hill. In short, the persecutions of the priests and friars went such lengths, that the very magistrates, who had at first been instruments of their cruelty, at last refused to assist at the punishing of heretics for the future, till a court, somewhat resembling the inquisition, was established, which continued the slaughters without remorse. In this reign five bishops, twenty-one ministers, and above eight hundred others, went to the flames in maintenance of the truth; numbers died in prison, and several by whips and tortures were forced to abjure.

Yet still in this dismal situation with respect to religion, the temporal concerns of the nation were conducted with very little better success. Calais, which had long been possessed by the English, and was a curb to the ambition of France, was taken in this reign by the duke of Guise, and all the English driven out of it, as the great Edward had driven the French out two hundred years before. The queen was only bent on ruining protestants, and took no care to defend her dominions.

Philip, her husband, seemed no way pleased with his alliance. The queen some time after their marriage, was delivered of a false conception. This created disgust in him; he therefore quitted England,

land, to purſue his own ſchemes in Flanders, leaving the queen ſufficiently mortified at his coldneſs, of which he gave repeated proofs. *A. D.* 1557.

The loſs of Calais, and the diſappointment with regard to her pregnancy, ſoon excited murmurs among the people. The proteſtants now exerted their influence in expoſing the weakneſs of the government and the cruelty of the council; but no perſon had a greater ſhare of reproach than the queen, and none felt it ſo ſeverely. The houſe of commons, that had hitherto been all along ſo ſubmiſſive, now alſo teſtified their diſpleaſure, and refuſed to grant a ſubſidy, though ſhe condeſcended to lay the bad ſtate of her affairs before them. During theſe mortifications her health ſenſibly declined: ſhe was naturally melancholy and ſullen, and her repeated diſappointments increaſed her diſtemper. She had been ill attended during her pretended pregnancy, having committed herſelf to the care of a woman, and neglected the advice of her phyſicians. After having been for ſome time afflicted with the dropſy, this diſorder carried her off in the forty-third year of her age, after a reign of about five years. Had ſhe been born at any other period, ſhe might have been a good princeſs, but her zeal for religion was louder than the calls of humanity. Henry VIII. her father, acted like a tyrant and a perſecutor from vicious motives, and he knew it: Mary was both a tyrant and a perſecutor from motives of virtue, and ſhe was never undeceived.

LETTER XXXIV.

WERE we to adopt the maxim of ſome, that evil may be done for the production of good, one might ſay, that the perſecutions in Mary's reign were permitted only to bring the kingdom over to the proteſtant religion. Nothing could preach ſo effectually againſt the cruelty and the vices of the monks, as the actions of the monks themſelves: wherever heretics were to be burnt, they were always preſent, rejoicing at the ſpectacle, inſulting the fallen, and frequently the firſt to thruſt the flaming brand againſt the faces of the condemned. The Engliſh were effectually converted by ſuch ſights as theſe. To bring any people over to any opinion, it is only neceſſary to perſecute inſtead of attempting to convince. The people had formerly embraced the reformed religion from fear; they were now internally proteſtants from inclination.

We have hitherto ſeen England, like the element that ſurrounds it, ever unſettled and ſtormy; ever ſinking under foreign invaſion or domeſtic diſputes: it had felt a ſhort interval of happineſs, indeed, under Henry VII. but his ſucceſſors ſoon diſturbed that felicity, and laid the country once more in blood. At length the genius of the people prevailed over all oppoſition, and England was now about to make its own happineſs, and to ſet mankind an example of induſtry, commerce, freedom, learning, opulence, and induſtry.

To Mary ſucceeded her ſiſter Elizabeth, who was unanimouſly declared queen at the accuſtomed places, and with the acclamations of the people. Elizabeth had her education in that beſt of ſchools, the ſchool of adverſity.

Jan. 15, 1558.

verſity. As during the life of her ſiſter, who had no children, ſhe was next heir to the throne, and at the ſame time was known to be of the proteſtant religion, ſhe was obnoxious to the reigning tyrant for two reaſons: it was feared ſhe might aſpire to the throne during her ſiſter's life; but it was ſtill more reaſonably apprehended, that ſhe would, if ever ſhe came to the crown, make an innovation in that religion which Mary took ſo much pains to eſtabliſh. The biſhops which had ſhed ſuch a deluge of blood, foreſaw this, and often told Mary, that her deſtroying meaner heretics was of no advantage to the ſtate, unleſs ſhe attacked the principal heretic; that it was to no purpoſe to lop off the branches while the body of the tree was ſuffered to ſtand. Mary ſaw and acknowledged the juſtice of their obſervations, confined her ſiſter with proper guards, and only waited for ſome new inſurrection, or ſome favourable pretext to deſtroy her: her own death prevented the perpetration of her meditated cruelty, and Elizabeth was taken from priſon to be fixed upon a throne.

Elizabeth had the made proper uſe of her confinement: being debarred the enjoyment of pleaſures abroad, ſhe ſought for knowledge at home; ſhe cultivated her underſtanding, learned the languages and ſciences; but, of all the arts in which ſhe excelled, her art of keeping fair with her ſiſter, of not offending the papiſts, of being in eſteem with the proteſtants, of diſſembling and learning to reign, were the greateſt.

This virgin monarch, whoſe memory England ſtill reveres with gratitude and reſpect, was ſcarce proclaimed queen, when Philip of Spain, who had been married to Mary, but who ever teſtified an inclination for Elizabeth, ſought her in marriage.

riage. What political motives Elizabeth might have againſt this match, is uncertain; but certain it is, ſhe neither liked the perſon nor the religion of her admirer; ſhe was willing at once to enjoy the pleaſure of independence and the vanity of numerous ſolicitations.

She had ever reſolved upon reforming the church, even in the reſtraints of a priſon; and, upon coming to the throne, ſhe immediately ſet about that great deſign. The people were now almoſt wholly of the proteſtant religion; the ill uſe the papiſts had made of their power, in the laſt reign, had totally undone their cauſe: a religion marked with cruelty, tyranny, and perſecution, was not a religion for the people of England. She began, therefore, in imitation of the deceaſed queen, to forbid all meddling with controverſy in the pulpit, and all innovations of the eſtabliſhed rights, except that the ſervice ſhould be performed in the vulgar tongue, till a parliament ſhould determine the proper modes of worſhip. The parliament ſoon met, and the reformation was finiſhed, and religion eſtabliſhed in the manner we enjoy it at preſent.

The oppoſition which was made to theſe religious eſtabliſhments was but weak: a conference of nine doctors on each ſide was propoſed and agreed to: they were to diſpute publickly on either ſide of the queſtion and it was reſolved that the people ſhould hold with that which came off with victory.

A. D. 1561. Diſputations of this kind are never attended with conviction to either party; ſo much is to be ſaid on either ſide, and ſo wide is the field that both ſides have to range in, that each generally loſes his ſtrength in vain preparations, and ineffectual prefacing, before he is properly ſaid to begin the engagement. The conference, therefore,

came

came to nothing: the papiſts declared, that it was not in their power to diſpute a ſecond time upon topics in which they had gained a former victory under queen Mary; and the proteſtants aſcribed their caution to their fears. Of nine thouſand four hundred beneficed clergymen, which were in the whole kingdom, only fourteen biſhops, twelve archdeacons, fifteen heads of colleges, and about eighty of the parochial clergy, choſe to quit their preferments rather than their religion. Thus England changed its belief in religion four times ſince Henry VIII. Strange, ſays a foreign writer, that a people who are ſo reſolute, ſhould be guilty of ſo much inconſtancy! that the ſame people, who this day publicly burnt heretics, ſhould the next not only think them guiltleſs, but confirm to their opinions!

Elizabeth was now fixed upon a proteſtant throne, while all the neighbouring nations were open or ſecret enemies; France, Scotland, Spain, the pope, were all combined againſt her; her ſubjects of Ireland were concealed enemies, and the catholic party in England, though not ſo numerous as formerly, was not yet entirely ſuppreſſed: theſe were the dangers ſhe had to fear, nor had ſhe one friend to aſſiſt her upon an emergency. In this ſituation, therefore, ſhe could hope for no other reſource, but what proceeded from the affection of her own ſubjects, and the wiſdom of her adminiſtration. To make herſelf beloved by the people, and, at the ſame time, feared by her courtiers, were the governing maxims of her conduct. She was frugal of the public treaſure, and ſtill more ſparing in her rewards to her favourites: this at once kept the people in ſpirits, and kept the great too poor to ſhake off lawful ſubjection. She diſtributed

both

both rewards and punishments with impartiality; knew when to flatter and when to upbraid; could dissemble submission, but preserve her prerogatives: in short she seemed to have studied the people she was to govern, and often to have flattered their follies in order to secure their hearts.

Her chief minister was Robert Dudley, son to the late duke of Northumberland, whom the queen seemed to regard from capricious motives, as he had neither abilities nor virtue; but to make amends, the two favourites next in power were Bacon and Cecil, men of great capacity and infinite application. They regulated the finances, and directed the political measures that were followed with so much success.

Mary Stewart, queen of France and Scotland, gave the first alarm to this state of tranquillity, by taking the title of queen of England; and her cause was supported by the popish faction, which still wanted to make new disturbances. The throne of Elizabeth was not yet perfectly fixed, and the intrigues of religion could still overturn it: she, therefore, was not remiss in sending an army into Scotland, and forcing the French troops out of that kingdom, by a treaty signed to that effect. Soon after the king of France died, and Elizabeth forced her rival to renounce the title of queen of England, which she had assumed. She went yet still further; she encouraged the parliament of Scotland to introduce the reformation into that country: her intrigues succeeded, and she thus gained over a stedfast friend in the Scots, from whom the English had, till then, only received repeated acts of enmity and ill-will.

This

This tempeſt was ſcarce allayed, when Philip of Spain gave new alarms. As long as he had fears from the power of the queen of Scots, by her union with France, he was ſtill attached to Elizabeth; but, when, by the death of the king of France her huſband, ſhe was again reduced to her primitive weakneſs, his jealouſy then began to fall upon Elizabeth. With this view he encouraged the inſurrections and diſcontents in Ireland, and Elizabeth with equal care ſuppreſſed them. He ſupported, in France, a league made to exclude the royal family from the throne; Elizabeth protected the oppoſite ſide. He oppreſſed the people of Holland with cruelty and injuſtice; Elizabeth ſupported them from ſinking under his power. Thus, on every ſide, ſhe guarded off the dangers that threatened her, and ſoon after, in her turn, prepared to act offenſively againſt her enemies.

But the cares of war did not repreſs her aſſiduity in the adminiſtration of juſtice at home: ſhe was reſolved to ſhew the Roman catholic party an example of moderation, which they might admire but could not imitate. The monks, who were diſpoſſeſſed of their monaſteries, had been aſſigned penſions, which were to be paid by the poſſeſſors of the forfeited lands. Theſe payments were eutirely neglected, and thoſe unhappy men, who had been educated in ſolitude and ignorance, were now ſtarving in old-age, too much diſregarded by the proteſtants, and too numerous to find relief from thoſe of their own perſuaſion. Elizabeth ordered that their penſions ſhould be paid with punctuality and juſtice, and ſatisfaction made for all arrears unjuſtly detained.

In

In order the more to ingratiate herſelf with the people, ſhe viſited Cambridge and Oxford, and made each a Latin ſpeech, and ſhewed, by her diſcourſe and conduct, a regard for thoſe ſeminaries of learning, which had been ſuppreſſed by her father.

She not only affected this obliging carriage to her inferiors, but alſo behaved in ſomething of a romantic ſtrain to the courtiers next her perſon. The gallantries of the court were conducted according to the rules of chivalry: every damſel had her night: Dudley, who was now become earl of Leiceſter, was generally the queen's; but all writers agree, that her paſſion for him never proceeded beyond the bounds of Platonic affection. When her commons, in a dutiful manner, repreſented to her how much the ſafety of the kingdom depended upon her marrying, ſhe thanked them in an obliging manner, and aſſured them ſhe was now become the wife of her people, and would be pleaſed at having it inſcribed on her tomb, That having reigned with equity, ſhe lived and died a virgin.

LETTER XXXV.

THE ancient ferocity of the Engliſh was not yet quite reclaimed: the barbarous method of fixing the monarch upon the throne, by executions performed upon the ſcaffold, was not quite done away: the only difference ſeemed to be, that formerly, thoſe who were obnoxious to the crown, fell without any legal trial; but now they fell with all the forms, yet all the ſeverity, of juſtice.

While

While Elizabeth was thus attempting to ſettle religion, to eſtabliſh the power, and humble the enemies of her country, ſhe at the ſame time was guilty of ſome inſtances of cruelty, which, though coloured with the pretext of law, could only be the effect of the yet uncivilized diſpoſition of the times. The catholics held meetings to reſtore their religion by open force: the counteſs of Lenox, Arthur Poole, and others, began to form factions in the kingdom; their plottings, however, were diſcovered, and, upon their own confeſſion, they were condemned; but the queen, in conſideration of their illuſtrious deſcent, forgave their offence. A ſiſter of the late Jane Grey, however, though leſs guilty, met with leſs clemency: ſhe had married the earl of Pembroke, without leave from the court; this was conſidered as an high offence, and the earl and ſhe were committed to the Tower. After a long impriſonment he was obliged to forſake her; and ſhe, loaded with the misfortune, died in confinement.

But this only prepared the way for a cruelty of a more heinous nature, which gave the world a diſagreeable remembrance of the tranſactions committed in the reign of her father. Mary, queen of Scots, had long renounced her title to the crown of England, but not her claim of ſucceeding to the throne: this renunciation, however, being extorted from her by Elizabeth, Mary took every method of diſturbing her in the quiet poſſeſſion of the crown, and yet gave every mark of reconciliation and ſincere amity. There were, in fact, many circumſtances to contribute to their mutual diſlike: the jealouſy of neighbouring crowns, the oppoſition of religion, of wit, and of beauty; Mary, leſs powerful, leſs abſolute, leſs politic, was however,

Elizabeth's

Elizabeth's ſuperior in perſonal charms, and this alone ſerved to enflame their animoſity. The queen of Scotland encouraged the catholic faction in England, while Elizabeth, with ſtill more ſucceſs, fomented the proteſtant party among the Scots. Mary had now, for ſome time, thoughts of marrying a ſecond huſband, after the death of the French king; Elizabeth, on the other hand, who had no thoughts of marriage herſelf, ſtrove by every art, to prevent this marriage, as ſhe conſidered that it would be ſtrengthening the power of her rival. With this view ſhe wrote Mary a letter, in which, after many inſincere proteſtations of friendſhip, ſhe begged that Mary would not offer to marry till her conſent ſhould firſt be obtained. This unreaſonable requeſt not a little diſturbed the queen of Scotland, but, fearing to offend her potent rival, ſhe pretended to comply: in ſecret, however, ſhe was reſolved to marry the earl of Darnly, her relation, who had the merit of being a catholic, like herſelf; but, perhaps, whoſe greateſt recommendation was the ſize of his perſon, which was large and comely. The party gained by Elizabeth in Scotland, tried every meaſure to prevent her deſign. It was agitated, whether the queen could marry without the conſent of the ſtates: ſeveral of the nobility roſe in arms to prevent it: the ambaſſadors of England made daily remonſtrances upon its impropriety, but all in vain: Mary, to cut ſhort their proceedings, had the marriage ſolemnized in her own chapel, and baniſhed the oppoſers by a ſolemn act of the ſtates.

A. D. 1565.

All hitherto appeared fortunate for Mary; her enemies baniſhed, her rival defeated, and herſelf married to the man ſhe loved: yet this was but a flattering calm; for ſoon, whether from the capri-

cioufneſs

ciouſneſs of her temper, or from what other cauſe I will not pretend to determine, lord Darnley, notwithſtanding the elegance of his perſon, became intirely diſagreeable to her. She had conceived ſuch an averſion to him, that it was ſoon obvious, even to the people; and ſhe took every method to mortify him in the eyes of the publick. Her vices were the cauſe of all her misfortunes: there was at that time in her court one David Rizzio, the ſon of a muſician at Turin, who had followed the ambaſſador from that court into Scotland. As he underſtood muſick to perfection, and ſung a good baſs, he was introduced into the queen's concert, who was ſo taken with him, that ſhe deſired the ambaſſador, upon his departure, to leave Rizzio behind. The excellence of his voice ſoon procured him greater familiarities: the queen loved him, confided in him, and ever kept him next her perſon. The new king, who only had the name, could not without jealouſy, ſee this inſinuating foreigner receive all the queen's favours, while he was treated only with contempt. Stung at once with envy, rage, and reſentment, he at length reſolved to murder the man he could not equal, and conſulted with ſome lords about the method of accompliſhing his cruel deſign. Men in power ever find accomplices in their guilt; two other lords and he ſettled it, that the murder ſhould be committed before the face of the queen, as a puniſhment for her ſcandalous conduct. Thus prepared, they were informed that Rizzio was, at that very inſtant, in the queen's chamber; lord Darnly led the way, conducting the aſſaſſins up by a private ſtair-caſe, and entered the queen's chamber, who was at table with her favourite Rizzio. Darnly

ſtood

ſtood for ſome time leaning upon the back of her chair. His fierce looks, and unexpected intruſion, in ſome meaſure alarmed the queen, who, however, kept ſilence, not daring to call out: a little after lord Ruthven, one of the murderers, and George Douglas, entered abruptly, all in arms, and attended with more of their accomplices. The queen could no longer refrain, but aſked the reaſon of this bold intruſion; Ruthven made her no anſwer, but ordered Rizzio to quit a place of which he was unworthy. Rizzio now ſaw that he was the object of their vengeance, and, trembling with fear, took hold of the queen's robes to put himſelf under her protection, who, on her part, ſtrove to interpoſe between the aſſaſſins and him: Douglas, in the mean time, had reached the unfortunate Rizzio, and, taking a dagger from the king's ſide, drew it, and, while the queen filled the room with her cries, he plunged it, in her preſence, into Rizzio's boſom. She was five months gone with child, and this horrid ſcene had ſuch an effect upon the fruit of her womb, that it is ſaid her child, who was afterwards king James I. could never venture to look upon a drawn ſword without ſhuddering. Thus ended Rizzio, a man who has been more ſpoken of, than perhaps any other who roſe from ſo mean a ſtation. What his other talents to pleaſe might have been, is unknown; but certain it is, that ſeveral indications of his ſkill in muſick remain even to the preſent time; all thoſe pleaſing Scotch airs, which are ſet in ſuch a peculiar taſte, being univerſally allowed to be of his compoſition.

This was but a temporary check upon Mary's power: ſhe reſumed her authority, by the influence of her charms upon the earl her huſband, who gave

gave up the murderers of Rizzio to her reſentment; but they had previouſly eſcaped into England. One criminal engagement, however, was ſcarcely got over, when Mary fell into a ſecond: the earl of Bothwell now began to hold the ſame place in her affections that Rizzio had formerly poſſeſſed. This new amour was attended with ſtill more terrible conſequences than the former; her huſband fell a victim to it. His life was firſt attempted by poiſon, but the ſtrength of his conſtitution ſaved him, for a ſhort time, only to fall by a more violent death: he was ſtrangled by night, the houſe in which the fact was committed being blown up with gun-powder, in order to perſuade the people that his death was accidental; but his ſhirt not being ſinged, and his ſlippers found near him, together with blue marks round his neck, ſoon confirmed the ſuſpicion of his real murder. His body was buried near that of Rizzio, among the Scottiſh kings.

All orders of the ſtate, the whole body of the people, accuſed Bothwell of this aſſaſſination, and at laſt demanded juſtice upon him from the queen, for the late murder, openly arraigning him of the guilt. In this univerſal demand for juſtice, the queen, deaf to the murmurs of her people, deaf to the voice of decency, married the murderer of her huſband, and prevailed upon him to divorce his former wife to make way for this fatal alliance.

Bothwell was poſſeſſed of all the inſolence which attends great crimes: he aſſembled the principal lords of the ſtate, and compelled them to ſign an inſtrument, purporting, *that they judged it the queen's intereſt to marry Bothwell, as he had lain with her againſt her will.* Theſe tranſactions excited the whole kingdom of Scotland to reſiſtance, and Mary,

abandoned by her followers, was obliged to give herſelf up as a priſoner to the confederacy. Bothwell fled to the Orkney iſlands. The queen, being confined in Lochlevin caſtle, was compelled to reſign the crown to her ſon, as yet a child; but ſhe was permitted to nominate a regent. She turned her eyes upon the earl of Murray, who was then in France, and appointed him, expecting that he would defend her cauſe, and reſtore her. In this, however, ſhe was entirely miſtaken; Murray, upon his arrival, inſtead of comforting her, as he formerly uſed, loaded her with reproaches, which reduced her almoſt to deſpair. The calamities of the great, however juſtly deſerved, excite pity and create friends; an army of forty thouſand men declared in her favour, and ſhe eſcaped from priſon to put herſelf at their head. But this was only to encounter new misfortunes; ſhe was met by a body of but four thouſand men, commanded by the new regent, and was totally defeated. To avoid falling into the hands of her enemies, ſhe fled towards the borders of England. Elizabeth, being informed of her misfortunes and her retreat, at firſt granted her an honourable reception, and ordered her to be lodged at a gentleman's houſe, where ſhe was treated with proper dignity. Notwithſtanding this kindneſs, ſhe refuſed to ſee her until ſhe had juſtified herſelf from the reproaches with which ſhe was branded. By this means Elizabeth in a manner declared herſelf umpire of the differences between the two parties, and each accordingly pleaded their cauſe before her; Mary by her emiſſaries, and Murray the regent, in perſon. It was the queen of England's duty to protect, and not to examine, her royal fugitive: however, ſhe lengthened out the pleadings on both

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ſides, and enjoyed the pleaſure of ſeeing her rival humbled without paſſing any definitive ſentence. Mary privately complained of her unworthy treatment and long delay; theſe complaints were carried to Elizabeth, which ended in the queen of Scots being ſent a priſoner to Tutbury caſtle.

The diſaſters of the crown of Scotland fell upon the people, divided as they were into factions, and animated with mutual animoſity. The regent attempting to quell them, was himſelf ſlain, and the aſſaſſins, pretending to act in the name of their impriſoned queen, made an incurſion into England, and committed ſome ravages on the frontier countries. Elizabeth, with an army, quickly repreſſed theſe invaders, and procured the earl of Lenox, father to the late king, to be elected in his room. In the mean time, while ſhe was employed in bringing Scotland to meaſures, ſhe found herſelf attacked, in her own dominions, by a conſpiracy. The pope in order to aſſiſt the rebels, procured a bull to be fixed up in ſeveral places in London, whereby he excommunicated Elizabeth, and abſolved her ſubjects from their oaths of allegiance. This bull was fixed up by John Felton, grand uncle to him whom we are ſhortly to ſee act another deſperate part. John Felton, when he was told that the government was in purſuit of him, diſdained to fly: he waited with intrepidity till he was taken, and then boldly confeſſed the fact of which he was charged, and gloried in the commiſſion: he might have received pardon upon acknowledging his crime, but he refuſed it, and was hanged near the place, meeting death with a reſolution that aſtoniſhed even the brave. What noble actions mi ght not ſuch a mind

have been capable of, had it at firſt received a right direction!

Theſe efforts, in favour of the queen of Scots, only ſerved to haſten her ruin. The two queens entered into various negotiations and frivolous treaties; the one attempting to humble her priſoner, the other with fruitleſs pride, attempting to preſerve the luſtre of fallen majeſty. Scotland, in the mean time, ſtreamed with blood: the papiſts and the proteſtants carried on a civil war. The archbiſhop of St. Andrew's, one of the warmeſt partizans of Mary, was taken in arms, and executed upon the depoſition of his confeſſor, who ſwore that this prelate had privately confeſſed that he was an accomplice in the murder of Darnly.

The greateſt misfortunes of Mary rather proceeded from her friends than enemies. The duke of Norfolk, who profeſſed a friendſhip for her, expected, by her means, to riſe to the Britiſh throne: he, therefore, privately negotiated a marriage with her, and ſhe, on the other hand, attempted to break off that which ſhe had already contracted with Bothwell. He formed a party in London, feeble indeed; but he expected aſſiſtance from the intrigues of the pope, and the arms of Spain. He was himſelf a weak man, and his plots were but ſhallow; the ſpies of Elizabeth diſcovered them all: he was arreſted, accuſed, condemned, and executed. This nobleman's blood only contributed to faſten the chains of the unfortunate Mary; yet ſtill ſhe conceived hopes from foreign alliances, which ſeldom are of any weight in domeſtic diſputes. She had the league in France in her favour, the pope, the Spaniards, and the jeſuits; we not only hoped to be reinſtated in her former power, but to have the crown of England,

to

to which ſhe laid claim as her birth-right, added to her own. In purſuance of theſe deſigns, a new conſpiracy was formed, fourteen of the conſpirators executed, and, laſt of all, Mary was brought to a trial, before a queen who had no other right to be her judge but that of power. Forty-two members of parliament, and five judges, were ſent to examine her in priſon: ſhe proteſted againſt their right, yet made a defence: they had originally no foundation in juſtice to try her, and they carried on her accuſation with only a ſhow of equity. In ſhort, after an impriſonment of eighteen years, this unhappy princeſs was brought to the block, and beheaded in one of the rooms of her priſon, which had been hung in black for the occaſion. *A. D.* 1587. This action ſtained the reign of Elizabeth with ſuch colours, that neither her diſſimulation, nor the proſperity of her reign, could ever waſh away: her ſubjects, while they found themſelves happy, attempted to excuſe her conduct, but conſcience internally condemned her cruelty, and time, that ſpeaks plain, at laſt declares her guilt. In treating the actions of mankind, we almoſt ever find both ſides culpable; and ſo it was here: Mary, who was a murderer and adultreſs, died by the orders of Elizabeth, who was at once cruel and unjuſt.

LETTER XXXVI.

THE conſtitution of England took a long ſeries of years to ſettle into form, nor even yet was ts ſtructure entirely compleated: the monarchs ſtill preſerved a degree of ancient pride, and often were guilty of injuſtice and tyranny, without being called

to an account. Had the actions of Elizabeth, which are now the ſubject of our praiſe, been performed by one of our preſent monarchs, they would be ſufficient to cauſe his expulſion. There is ſomething lucky in every great reign, like this in view; its luſtre is rather owing to the indifferent periods that preceed it, than to its own intrinſic value. Elizabeth left her kingdom, it muſt be owned, in a better ſtate than ſhe found it; but her actions ſhould neither the ſubject of our praiſe, nor the object of our imitation.

We ſee a mixture of cruelty and gallantry in all the tranſactions of theſe times: while Elizabeth was thus plotting the death of Mary, ſhe was, at the ſame time, employed in a treaty of marriage with the young duke of Anjou. This, however, came to nothing, the queen reſolving to enjoy that power uncontrouled, which her ſubjects had not yet learned to abridge.

But, though ſhe diſliked an huſband, yet none more paſſionately deſired to have a lover. It is thought, indeed, her affections were confined to Platonic wiſhes only, and her age, for ſhe now began to decline, ſeemed to favour the ſuppoſition; but the choice of her favourites countenanced the contrary report, and her ſorrow for the earl of Leiceſter, who died about this time, confirmed it. But one favourite always made room for another, and Devereux, earl of Eſſex, ſucceeded Dudley, earl of Leiceſter. This nobleman was young, active, ambitious, witty, and handſome: in the field and at court he ever appeared with ſuperior luſtre. In all the maſques which were then performed, the earl and Elizabeth were generally coupled as partners; and, although ſhe was almoſt ſixty, and he not

half ſo old, yet flattery had taught her to forget the diſparity of age: the world told her ſhe was ſtill beautiful and young, and ſhe was inclined to think ſo. This young earl's intereſt in the queen's heart, as may naturally be expected, promoted his intereſts in the ſtate: he conducted all things without a rival, and, wherever he went, he acquired a degree of unbounded popularity. Young and unexperienced as he was, he at length began to fancy the applauſe of the people given to his merits, and not to his favour: thus poſſeſſed of a falſe opinion of his own ſecurity, to uſe the words of the poet, he kicked down the ladder by which he roſe; he began to deſpiſe the queen, and was heard to drop ſome expreſſions, that he thought her, in ſpite of flattery, both old and ugly. Her remonſtrances, on this occaſion, were ſuch as might have been expected from a diſappointed girl, very angry, yet wiſhing for a vindication. She gave him, in a paſſion, a box on the ear, pardoned him, employed him; he again tranſgreſſed, and ſhe again pardoned the offence. Secure in her affections, but at length proceeded to actual diſobedience: his former favour had gained him enemies, his preſent inſolence loſt him the friendſhip of the queen; he was condemned to retirement, when he might have been capitally convicted. He now came to a ſenſe of his miſconduct, and was reſolved to try the long unpractiſed arts that had at firſt brought him into favour. Immediately after ſentence, when he was preparing for retirement into the country, he firſt aſſured the queen, that he could never be happy till he again ſaw thoſe eyes which were uſed to ſhine upon him with ſuch luſtre; that, in expectance of that happy moment, like another

Nebuchadnezzar, he would dwell with the beaſts of the field, and be wet with the dew of heaven, till ſhe again propitiouſly took pity on his ſufferings. This romantic meſſage ſeemed peculiarly pleaſing to the queen; ſhe thought him ſincere from the conſciouſneſs of her own ſincerity: ſhe replied, that, after ſome time, when convinced of his humility, ſomething perhaps might be expected from her lenity. This hope of pardon made him think ſlightly of his guilt: his pride once more increaſing with his ſucceſs, he laid deſigns of deſtroying his rivals in power, and ſecuring the perſon of the queen. With this reſolution, he impriſoned the queen's meſſengers, headed a few malecontents, and marched through the city, exhorting the citizens to arms, and crying out, For the queen? for the queen! During a long march, not one citizen thought proper to join him, though numbers, led by curioſity, ran to ſee him paſs by. In this diſappointment, word was brought that he was proclaimed a traytor; upon which he made one effort more to excite an inſurrection, but without ſucceſs: he therefore now reſolved to return to his own houſe, but found the ſtreets ſecured by a great chain, and a guard of ſoldiers. As he ſaw no other way to force his paſſage, but by an attack upon the guards, he immediately fell on, attended by his followers, but was beat back and wounded in the thigh. He then went down to the water-ſide, and putting himſelf and his retinue on board ſmall boats, he eſcaped to his houſe, which he fortified in the beſt manner he could. The houſe was ſoon inveſted by the lord admiral, and the earl and his followers were obliged to deliver themſelves up: the earl of Southampton was a companion in his guilt, and

his

his misfortunes; they were ſoon after brought to their trials, and condemned to die. When the day of his death came, the queen appeared irreſolute; ſhe ſent an order to ſtop the execution, and ſoon after ordered it to proceed. However romantic it may ſeem, ſhe felt in her boſom all the fluctuations of love and reſentment, and was irreſolute which paſſion to obey: her reſentment, at laſt, prevailed; he was executed ſix days after his ſentence, and died with penitence and reſolution. *A. D.* 1600.

Thus died a favourite who had merits but did not owe his riſe to them: he was gallant, romantic, and oſtentatious: his genius for ſhows, and thoſe pleaſures that carry an image of war, was as remarkable as his ſpirit in the profeſſion, itſelf; and, had he been poſſeſſed of humility equal to his abilities, he at laſt might have mounted a throne inſtead of a ſcaffold. The queen, at firſt, carried her reſentment ſo far, as to have a ſermon preached at St. Paul's croſs to blacken his memory: his haughty behaviour, and unreguarded expreſſions, had entirely alienated her affections, and imprinted an aſperity, which, it ſeems, even his death could not ſoften.

With the death of this favourite, Elizabeth's pleaſures ſeemed to expire; ſhe afterwards went through the buſineſs of the ſtate merely from habit, but her happineſs was no more. Hiſtorians are fond of repreſenting all their characters without paſſion, and to give to every action of the great either political or rational motives; they therefore treat the queen's affection as a fable: but many of the actions of her life appear dictated by reſentment or regard, nor ever had woman a greater variety of caprice: the great feel as the reſt of mankind,

and her paſſions were particularly violent and laſting. She lived but a ſhort time after the death of Eſſex, and had the mortification of being forſaken by moſt of her courtiers before ſhe died, who now ſtrove to court the favour of king James, whom ſhe had appointed her ſucceſſor. She died in the ſeventieth year of her age, and the forty-fifth of her reign. Her character differed with her circumſtances; in the beginning of her reign ſhe was moderate and humble, towards the end haughty and ſevere: ſhe was indebted to her good fortune that her miniſters were excellent, but it was owing to her want of wiſdom, that her favourites, who were choſen more immediately by herſelf, were unworthy. Tho' ſhe was poſſeſſed of excellent ſenſe, yet ſhe never had the diſcernment to diſcover that ſhe wanted beauty: to flatter her charms, even at the age of ſixty-five, was the ſureſt way of gaining her intereſt and eſteem. She was greater in her public than her private character, and they moſt diſliked and feared her who were placed next her perſon. But whatever might have been the queen's character, the character of her people, at that period, demands our praiſe and imitation. Permit me to reſerve that glorious picture of genius ſtruggling to get free from barbarity, to the ſucceeding letter.

A. D. 1603.

LETTER XXXVII.

WHatever puniſhments or cruelties were exerted in this reign, they moſtly fell upon the great; but never was the people of England more happy internally, or more formidable abroad, than during this period. The vices and virtues of a nation are often wholly aſcribed to the monarch who rules them;

hem; but ſuch influence extends only to a narrow phere: no ſingle reign, however good, nor indeed any ſucceſſion of virtuous reigns, can give happineſs, morals, and arts, a general ſpread, unleſs the people be pre-diſpoſed for the reception. From Narva to Antoninus, what a noble ſucceſſion of Roman emperors! and yet, even under them, Rome was declining faſt into barbarity. It was not owing to Elizabeth alone that England enjoyed all its preſent happineſs; the people, as if ſpontaneouſly, began to exert their native vigour, and every art and every genius put forth all their powers.

The Engliſh were put in poſſeſſion of neither new nor ſplendid acquiſitions, nor had they ſuch great influence in foreign courts; but commerce grew up among them, and, almoſt without a protector, flouriſhed with vigour. The people now began to know their real element, and this rendered them more happy than the foreign conqueſts, or the former victories, of the celebrated kings: a nation, which was once ſubject to every invaſion, and the prey of every plunderer, now became powerful, polite, laborious, and enterpriſing. The newly ſucceſsful voyages of the Spaniards and Portugueſe excited their emulation: they fitted out ſeveral expeditions of diſcovering a northern paſſage to China, and, though diſappointed in their aim, their voyages were not wholly fruitleſs. Drake and Cavendiſh ſurrounded the globe, and diſcovered ſkill and courage ſuperior to thoſe very nations which had firſt ſhewed them the way. The famous Sir Walter Raleigh, without any aſſiſtance from the government, colonized New England. Theſe expeditions at length formed one of the moſt powerful marines of Europe, and they were able to oppoſe the fleet of Spain, called by the boaſt-

ing title of the Invincible Armada, with an hundred ſhips. When this fleet of Spain had been deſtroyed, partly by tempeſts, and partly by conduct, the Engliſh remained maſters at ſea. This ſuperiority was conſtantly increaſing, till another victory, gained over the fleet of Philip III. gained them a naval ſovereignty, which they have ever ſince inviolably preſerved, and which has been ſcarce ever moleſted by a competitor.

But external commerce was not more cultivated than internal manufactures: ſeveral of the Flemings, who were perſecuted from their own country, by the bad conduct of Spain, found an aſylum in England: theſe more than repaid the protection they found, by the arts which they introduced, and the induſtry which was thus propagated by their example.

Thus far in the uſeful arts: but, in the polite arts, England excelled all the world; ſo that many writers fix the Auguſtan age of literature to that period. The diſputes, cauſed by the reformation of religion, had retarded the progreſs of our language among the powerful, yet ſpread a love of literature among the lower orders of the ſtate. The people now began to learn to read, and the Bible, tranſlated into the vulgar tongue, was not only ſerviceable in improving their morals, but their taſte. The perſecution of Mary was, however, of great detriment to the language: the reformers, being driven into foreign countries, on their return, introduced into their ſermons a language compounded of thoſe dialects which they had acquired abroad, and the language of England was actually in a ſtate of barbarity when Elizabeth came to the throne. Latin ſermons were in faſhion, and few of the nobility had either the courage, or

the

the taſte, to declare themſelves the patrons of learning.

Either the fortune or the diſcernment of Elizabeth made Parker archbiſhop of Canterbury; and he ſet himſelf aſſiduouſly to reform the corruptions of ſtyle, both by precept and example: for this purpoſe he reviewed and corrected the Engliſh tranſlation of the Bible, and printed it with royal magnificence. His own ſtyle had all the eloquence of the times; it was manly and conciſe, but wanted ſmoothneſs.

The earl of Eſſex, a ſketch of whoſe hiſtory you have ſeen, was himſelf one of the greateſt improvers of our language; his education had freed him from the technical barbarities of the ſchools, and his ſtyle ran on unembarraſſed by the ſtiffneſs of pedantry. His letters (particularly that which he wrote from Ireland to the queen) are regarded as models of fine writing to this day. Sir Walter Raleigh has the reputation of being one of the improvers of our language, and none can conteſt with him the honour of being foremoſt in the improvement of our hiſtory. Hooker, the author of the Eccleſiaſtical Polity, was the firſt Engliſhman whoſe ſtyle, upon theological ſubjects, does honour to his memory as a ſcholar and a gentleman: but what particularly deſerves notice, is, that a man, like him, bred up in poverty, and ſecluſion from the polite, ſhould expreſs himſelf in a more modern and elegant manner than his contemporary authors, Sidney or Raleigh, who were bred at court.

I ſhall mention only one proſe writer more, the greateſt and wiſeſt of all our Engliſh philoſophers, and perhaps the greateſt philoſopher among men: I need hardly mention the name of Francis Bacon,

lord

lord Verulam: his ſtyle is copious and correct, and his learning only ſurpaſſed by his genius.

Among the poets, two of particular note attract out attention, Spenſer and Shakeſpear: to attempt an encomium of either is needleſs; all praiſe muſt be too low for their merits, or unneceſſary to make them more known.

In ſhort, the Engliſh now began to rival the Spaniards, who, at that time, aimed at univerſal monarchy, both in arts and arms: the city of London became more large and more beautiful; the people of the country began to conſider agriculture as one of the moſt uſeful and honourable employments; the Engliſh were, in power, the ſecond nation in Europe, and they were, ſhortly, to become the greateſt, by becoming the moſt free.

During this reign, a few ſuffered death for their religious opinions: but we may venture to aſſert, that they raiſed the diſturbances by which they ſuffered; for thoſe who lived in quiet were permitted to enjoy their opinions under the neceſſary reſtraints.

If we look through hiſtory, and conſider the riſe of kingdoms, we ſhall not find, in all its volumes, ſuch an inſtance of a nation becoming wiſe, powerful, and happy, in ſo ſhort a time. The ſource of our felicity began in Henry VII. and, though repreſſed by the intervening tyrannies, yet, before the end of Elizabeth's reign, who was only his granddaughter, the people became the moſt poliſhed and the moſt happy people upon earth. Liberty, it is true, as yet continued to fluctuate: Elizabeth knew her own power, and often ſtretched it to the very limits of deſpotiſm: but, when commerce was introduced, liberty neceſſarily entered in its train; for there never was a nation perfectly commercial and perfectly deſpotic.

LETTER XXXVIII.

YOU are now to turn to a reign, which, though not ſplendid, was uſeful: the Engliſh only wanted a ſeaſon of peace to bring thoſe arts to perfection which were planted in the preceding reign. No monarch was fonder of peace than James I. who ſucceeded Elizabeth; and none ever enjoyed a reign of more laſting tranquillity. Hiſtorians, for what reaſon I know not, are fond of deſcribing this monarch's tranſactions with ridicule; but, for my own part, I cannot avoid giving juſt applauſe both to his wiſdom and felicity.

King James came to the throne with the univerſal approbation of all orders of the ſtate: for, in his perſon was united every claim to the crown, that either deſcent, bequeſt, or parliamentary ſanction could confer. But, on his firſt arrival, it was readily ſeen, that he by no means approved of the treatment of his mother, Mary queen of Scots, and not only refuſed to wear mourning himſelf for the late queen, by whom ſhe had been beheaded; but alſo denied admiſſion to any who appeared in mourning upon her account.

Upon a review of his conduct, there are few of this monarch's actions that do not ſeem to ſpring from motives of juſtice and virtue; his only error ſeems to conſiſt in applying the deſpotic laws and maxims of the Scottiſh government to the Engliſh conſtitution, which was not ſuſceptible of them. He began his reign by a laudable attempt to unite both the kingdoms into one; but this the jealouſy of the Engliſh prevented: they were apprehenſive, that the poſts and employments, which were in

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the gift of the court, might be conferred on the Scotch, whom they were, as yet, taught to regard as foreigners. By the repulſe in this inſtance, he found the people he came to govern very different from thoſe he had left, and perceived that the liberty and the ſpirit of the Engliſh could not be reſtrained by the ſhadows of divine right and paſſive obedience.

He now, therefore, attempted to correct his firſt miſtake, and to peruſe the Engliſh laws, as he had formerly done thoſe of his own country, and by theſe he was reſolved to govern. He was in this ſecond attempt diſappointed in his aim. In a government ſo fluctuating as that of England, cuſtom was ever deviating from law, and what was enacted in one reign was contradicted, by precedent in another: the laws and the manners of England were, at this particular juncture, very different from each other. The laws had all along declared in favour of an unlimited prerogative: the preſent manners, on the contrary, were formed by inſtruments and upon principles of liberty. All the kings and queens before him, except ſuch as were weakened by inteſtine diviſions, or the dread of approaching invaſion, iſſued rather commands than received advice from their parliament. James was early ſenſible of their conduct in this reſpect, and ſtrove to eſtabliſh the prerogative upon the laws, unmindful of the alteration of manners among the people, who had, in the reign of queen Mary, got an idea of their own power, of which, when the majority are once ſenſible, they never deſiſt from defending.

Numberleſs, therefore, were the diſputes between the king and his parliament, during this whole

whole reign; one attempting to keep the royal ſplendor unſullied, the other aiming at leſſening the dangerous part of prerogative; the one labouring to preſerve the laws and inſtitutions of former reigns, the other ſtedfaſt in aſſerting the inherent privileges of mankind. Thus we ſee virtue was the cauſe of the diſſenſion on either ſide; and the principles of both, though ſeemingly oppoſite, were, in fact, founded either in law or in reaſon. When the parliament would not grant a ſubſidy, James had examples enough, among his predeceſſors, to extort a benevolence. Edward IV. Henry VIII. and others, had often done this; and he was entitled, undoubtedly, by precedent, to the ſame privilege. The houſe of commons, on the other hand, who began to find themſelves the protectors of the people, and not the paſſive inſtruments of the crown, juſtly conſidered, that this extorted benevolence might, at length, make the ſovereign entirely independent of the parliament, and therefore complained againſt it, as an infringement of their privileges. Theſe attempts of the crown, and thoſe murmurings of the people, continued through this whole reign, and firſt gave riſe to that ſpirit of party which has ever ſince ſubſiſted in England; the one ſide declaring for the king's prerogative, the other for the people's liberty.

Whenever the people, as I have already obſerved, get ſight of liberty, they never quit the view: the commons, as may naturally be expected in the preſent juncture, gained ground, even though defeated; and the monarch, notwithſtanding his profeſſions and reſolutions to keep his prerogative untouched, was every day loſing ſome ſmall part of his authority. Hiſtorians are apt to charge this to his imbecillity; but it, in reality, aroſe

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from the ſpirit of the times: the clergy, who had returned from baniſhment during the laſt reign, had diſſeminated republican principles among their hearers, and no art nor authority could check its growth; ſo that, had the moſt active, or the moſt diligent monarch upon earth, been then ſeated on the throne, yet he could not have preſerved the ancient privileges of Engliſh monarchy unimpaired.

The clemency and the juſtice of this monarch's reign early appeared from that ſpirit of moderation which he ſhewed to the profeſſors of each religion; the minds of the people had been long irritated againſt each other, and each party perſecuted the reſt, as it happened to prevail: James wiſely obſerved, that men ſhould be puniſhed only for actions, and not for opinions; each party murmured againſt him, and the univerſal complaint of every ſect was the beſt argument of his moderation towards all.

Yet, mild as he was, there was a project contrived, in the very beginning of his reign, for the re-eſtabliſhment of popery, which ſeemed to be even of infernal extraction: a more horrid or a more terrible ſcheme never entered into the human mind; the maſſacre of St. Bartholomew, in France, in which ſixty thouſand proteſtants were murdered in cold blood, was, in reality, not ſo dreadful. The catholics of England had expected ſome condeſcenſions from the king, which he was unwilling to grant: this refuſal determined them to take different meaſures for the eſtabliſhment of their religion and their party; they were reſolved to cut off the king and both houſes of parliament at one blow. The houſe where the parliament of England ſits, is built on arched vaults, and in theſe the papiſts were determined to lay gun-powder, in order to blow up the king and all the members of both houſes at their

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next ſitting. For this deed of deſperation a number of perſons united, among which were Robert Cateſby, Thomas Piercy, kinſman to the earl of Northumberland; John Grant, Ambroſe Rookwood, Chriſtopher Wright, Francis Treſham, Guy Fawkes, and Everard Digby. How horrid ſoever the contrivance, yet every member ſeemed faithful and ſecret in the league, and, about two months before the ſitting of parliament, they hired the cellar under the parliament houſe, and bought a quantity of coals with which it was then filled, as if for their own uſe: the next thing done was to convey, privately, thirty-ſix barrels of gun-powder, which had been purchaſed in Holland, and which were covered under the coals and faggots. The day for the ſitting of the parliament approached; never was treaſon more ſecret, or ruin more apparently inevitable: the conſpirators expected the day with impatience, and gloried in their meditated guilt. A remorſe of private friendſhip ſaved the kingdom, when all the ties, divine and human, were too weak to ſave it: Thomas Piercy conceived a deſign of ſaving the life of the lord Monteagle, his intimate friend and companion. About ten days before the ſitting, this nobleman, upon his return home, received a letter from a perſon unknown, the meſſenger making off as ſoon as he had delivered it; the letter was to this effect: *Stay away from this parliament, for God and man have concurred to puniſh the wickedneſs of the times. Think not ſlightly of this warning; though the danger does not appear, yet they ſhall receive a terrible blow, without knowing from whence it comes. The danger will be paſt as ſoon as you have burnt this letter, and this counſel may do you good, but cannot do you harm.* The contents of this myſterious letter ſurpriſed and puzzled the nobleman

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to whom it was addreſſed: he communicated it inſtantly to the ſecretary of ſtate, and the ſecretary ſhewed it to the council; none of them were capable of comprehending the meaning of it, and they reſolved to communicate it to the king. In this univerſal agitation between doubt and apprehenſion, the king was the firſt who penetrated the meaning of its fatal contents; he concluded that ſome ſudden danger was preparing by means of gun-powder. The lord chamberlain ſent proper perſons, the very night before the ſitting of parliament, to examine the vaults above-mentioned: there the whole train of powder was diſcovered, and a man in a cloak and boots, with a dark lanthorn in his hand, preparing for the dreadful attempt; this was Guy Fawkes, who paſſed for Piercy's ſervant. The atrociouſneſs of his guilt inſpired him with reſolution, and, with an undaunted air, he told them, that, had he blown them and himſelf up together, he had been happy. He obſtinately refuſed to name his accomplices; the ſight of the rack, however, at length brought him to a confeſſion. No nation fears death leſs than the Engliſh, but none dread torments more.

Nov. 5, 1605.

The conſpirators, who had prepared all things to ſecond the mine at Weſtminſter, finding their plot diſcovered, fled different ways to aſſemble their catholic friends, whom they expected to riſe in their defence; but, the country being every where alarmed againſt them, they were at laſt forced, to the number of about an hundred, to ſtop at an houſe in Warwickſhire, where they were reſolved to ſell their lives dearly. A ſpark of fire happening to fall among ſome gun-powder that was laid to dry, it blew up, and ſo maimed the principal conſpirators, that the ſurvivors reſolved to open the

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gate, and ſally through the multitude that ſurrounded the houſe. Some inſtantly were ſlain with a thouſand wounds; Cateſby, Piercy, and Winter, ſtanding back to back, fought long and deſperately, till, in the end, the two firſt fell covered with blood, and the other was taken alive. Such as ſurvived the ſlaughter were tried and convicted; ſeveral fell juſt victims to juſtice, and others experienced the king's mercy. Two jeſuits, Garnet and Oldcorn, who were privy to the plot, ſuffered with the reſt: the king maintained, that they were puniſhed juſtly; but, by their own party, they were regarded as martyrs to religion, though without ground, for James was too humane to condemn any upon ſuch ſlight motives as thoſe of opinion.

The diſcovery and extinction of this conſpiracy, which was entirely owing to the wiſdom of the king, gained him the love of his ſubjects, though it had but little influence over his parliament, in extorting ſupplies. His deſire of peace with foreign ſtates diminiſhed his authority at home; for, though he talked boldly of his prerogative in parliament, yet, unlike ſome of his predeceſſors, he had no ſtanding army to back his pretenſions: his ſpeeches, which were rather arguments in favour of royal authority than directions or advice, only put both houſes upon arguing with him in his own way, but not upon complying with his requeſts. They refuſed him ſupplies, when they knew it could be done with impunity. His liberality and his indigence ſoon forced him to condeſcenſions, which, when once granted, could never be again recalled: thus, while he thought himſelf enlarging the royal prerogative, he was, in reality, abridging it on every ſide.

Perhaps

Perhaps the oppoſition this king met with from his parliament was the motive of his encouraging favourites, who might help him to reduce them to his meaſures: his firſt choice was fixed upon Robert Carr, who, from a private gentleman, was brought up, through all the gradations of preferment, till created earl of Somerſet. An amour between this gentleman and the counteſs of Eſſex, one of the lewdeſt, yet fineſt, woman of her time, at laſt terminated in his diſgrace: his friend, Sir Thomas Overbury, had declared againſt his marrying this lady, who was eſpouſed to another: this advice procured the reſentment of Somerſet, and the hatred of the counteſs. The king, by falſe pretences, was inſtigated to confine Sir Thomas in the Tower, and here the earl and the counteſs cauſed him to be poiſoned. When this tranſaction came to the king's knowledge, he delivered him to public juſtice, by which he was condemned; but he received the royal pardon, though he ever after continued in diſgrace,

His next, and greateſt favourite, was George Villars, afterwards duke of Buckingham, whoſe perſon and beauty firſt drew the king's attention and regard. This nobleman was the firſt who was ever created a duke in England without being allied to the royal family: it may be reckoned among the moſt capricious circumſtances of this reign, that a king, who was bred a ſcholar, ſhould chuſe, for his favourites, the moſt illiterate of his courtiers; that he, who trembled at a drawn ſword, ſhould laviſh favours on one who promiſed to be the hero of a romance. Buckingham firſt inſpired young prince Charles, who was afterwards famous for his miſfortunes and death, with a deſire of going diſguiſed into Spain, to court the Infanta: their adventures

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in this romantic expedition could fill novels, and have actually been made the ſubject of many. Charles was the knight-errant, and Buckingham ſerved under him as ſquire: they ſet out poſt, and travelled through France under the names of Jack and Tom Smith. They appeared at Paris in large buſhy periwigs, which ſhadowed their faces. They were received in Spain with all poſſible reſpect; but Buckingham filled the whole court with intrigues, adventures, ſerenades, and jealouſy. To make the folly complete, he fell in love with the ducheſs of Olivarez, the prime miniſter's wife, and inſulted the prime miniſter. Theſe levities were not to be endured at ſuch a court as that of Spain, where jealouſy is ſo prevalent, and decorum ſo neceſſary; the match was broke off, and the prince was permitted to return in ſafety.

A match for this prince was ſoon after negotiated with Henrietta, the daughter of Henry IV. of France, and this met with better ſucceſs than the former: Charles had ſeen this princeſs, when he paſſed through that kingdom in diſguiſe; he admired her beauty, and from every quarter was informed of her ſenſe and diſcretion. A diſpenſation was got from the pope for her marrying a proteſtant prince, but king James died before the conſummation of the nuptials.

Were we to take the character of this monarch as deſcribed by Rapin, we ſhould conſider him as one of the worſt of princes, even while he pretends to defend him. *It is this injudicious hiſtorian's* method, wherever he finds a good character among our kings, to load it with reproach; wherever he meets a bad one, to extenuate its guilt; ſo that every monarch is levelled by him to one common ſtandard of indifference. His remarks upon particular

cular facts are similar to his characters: whatever other historians have laid down as motives, he undertakes to contradict, and fancies that he thus acquires an air of impartiality. In the present instance, he strongly insinuates thoughout, that James was a papist, with no better proofs than his being ever a favourer of toleration: he had but just before blamed Mary, and with reason, for her implacable partiality, yet he condemns James only because he was impartial. To this monarch the English are indebted for that noble freedom of opinion they have since enjoyed; a benefit of which narrow-minded bigots have too aften strove to deprive them.

With regard to foreign negotiations, James neither understood nor cultivated them; and, perhaps, in the government of such a kingdom as England, domestic politics alone are requisite. His reign was marked with none of the splendors of triumph, nor no new conquests or acquisitions: but the arts were nevertheless silently and happily going on to improvement; reason was extending its influence, and shewing mankind a thousand errors in religion and government that had been rivetted by long prescription. People now no longer joined to some popular leader, but each began to think for himself: the reformation had introduced a spirit of liberty, even while the constitution and the laws were built upon arbitrary power. James taught them, by his own example, to argue upon these topics; he set up the divine authority of kings against the natural privileges of the people: the subject began in controversy, and it was soon found that the monarch's was the weakest side.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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